



**USMC  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OFFICER  
Spouse - Family Handbook**

**Version 3.1**

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**Headquarters Marine Corps  
International Issues Branch  
Plans, Policy & Operations**

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

1. As new members of the Marine Corps IAO family, we want to whole-heartedly welcome you to your first exposure to this highly interesting and important international field of work. Your IAO husband or wife (or, for children, your father or mother) has embarked on a path to become a highly trained and extremely valuable professional expert in International Affairs. We want you to know how well aware we are of the vital support you provide as a family member to the overall success of the IAO mission. We hope this small guide can be of some assistance in explaining the IAO program, answering some of your questions, and will help your family to enjoy your overseas tour.
2. We have organized this guide to follow the progression of the IAO training and utilization program as it currently exists. The next chapter will begin by discussing the International Affairs Officer Programs, the IAO role, and the steps in becoming an IAO. We also encourage you to participate in the Spouse's briefing portion of the annual FAOOC (Foreign Area Officer's Orientation Conference) hosted each year at Monterey by the US Army. During that briefing you will be provided a wealth of information by the State Department, US Army and other agencies about overseas life and the world of the International Affairs Officer.
3. **POCs:** During the course of your overseas travel, and while living abroad, you will undoubtedly discover items of interest, or develop some tips and helpful suggestions that you'd like to share with other families. We strongly encourage you to email your thoughts and ideas for improvements and additions to this guide, or if you just want to ask questions. The current POCs for the IAO program are below. If the POC names change in the future before this handbook is updated the phone numbers for the offices should remain the same.

- a. HQMC - International Affairs Officer Program Coordinator :  
Maj Jonathan Brown Phone: (703)692-4365  
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Email: Nimish.verma.ctr@usmc.mil

- b. Other POCs \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Chapter 2

### **IAP Mission FAO/RAO**

1. More than likely your IAO spouse has already discussed portions of the USMC IAO program with you, so this may just be a different way of introducing them to you. The USMC IAP (Study Track) Training Program provides selected officers with extensive professional instruction in the study of the military forces, culture, history, sociology, economics, politics and geography in an assigned region. Foreign Area Officers complete one year of graduate study in National Security Affairs (with regional emphasis) at NPS, followed by a program of language study of varying length (7-15 months) at the Defense Language Institute (DLI). Upon completion of language training FAOs receive a week and a half of additional preparatory training and briefings in the DC area prior to embarking on the final phase of their training - one year of immersion, living and travelling in their region of expertise commonly referred to as “In Country Training (ICT)”. The ICT phase serves as the culmination of a FAO’s training by providing the opportunity to apply the language skills and graduate education gained in Phase I training to the realities of life on the ground in the assigned regions of the world. FAOs receive their graduate degree once they have completed their language training at DLI. Please note that when class space is available at DLI spouses may also be permitted to attend language training, which is to your advantage if you can spare the time. Spouses must however take and pass a Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) with a minimum required score for the language you will be taking. Not intended as a test you can study for, the DLAB merely serves as an indicator to predict an individual’s ability to successfully learn a foreign language. If you would like to receive language instruction, but are either unable to secure a school seat or are unable to attend classes, then you may be able to complete a self-paced “Head-Start Program” through DLI. You should look into these and other options when first arriving with your spouse at Monterey.
2. The RAO Study Track program is constructed the same as the FAO program but without the language requirement or in-country immersion. The National Security Affairs curriculum for RAOs, however, is 18 months in length to allow for the completion of a thesis. RAOs are normally given a utilization assignment immediately upon graduating from NPS. FAOs however will return to the fleet for a tour in their primary MOS before receiving a FAO utilization tour.
3. In short, the IAP prepares officers for future assignments as attachés, or in other high level Marine Corps, Joint, and Combined Staff billets in operations, planning, or intelligence. The spouses and families of our International Affairs

officers provide vital support and encouragement to these officers, thereby directly contributing to the overall success of the IAP mission. By understanding more about the Marine Corps IAO programs spouses and families can provide even greater input for continued improvements to the programs.

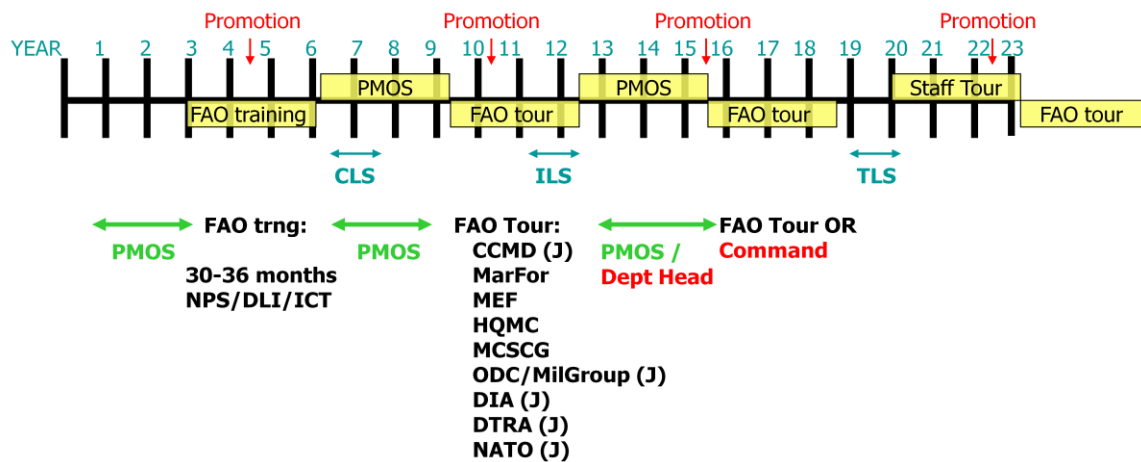
4. Our hope therefore, is that throughout your experience as an IAO family, you will continue to share with us your ideas and suggestions, experiences and innovations. In this manner you can help us make this guide more useful for the officers and families who follow you on this interesting and important career path.

## Chapter 3

### Your Spouse's Career Management in the FAO Program

Your spouse's FAO designation is an Additional MOS; it does not replace their Primary MOS. It is important to remember that this entails a dual-tracked career progression in which your spouse is expected to remain proficient in their primary MOS by completing a tour in their PMOS between every FAO tour (i.e. 3 years as a FAO, 3 years in PMOS).

#### *FAO Career Path:*



This means that after completing ICT, your spouse will return to their PMOS for a tour in the operating forces. It may seem counterintuitive for the Marine Corps to spend 3 years training a Marine to be a FAO only to immediately send them back to their PMOS, which may have little to do with being a Foreign Area Officer. However, it is important to remember staying out of their PMOS for too many years will make your spouse non-competitive for promotion and on the fast track to being a terminal Major or Captain. In order to stay relevant to the Marine Corps and eligible for promotion, a dual track career management system has been adopted by the Marine Corps. Also note that a Master's degree is not something that can simply be turned off; your spouse's newly acquired knowledge and analytical skills will only make them more proficient at their PMOS.

## Chapter 4

### Preparing to Move Overseas – Family Checklist

1. No matter how many times you and your family are asked to gather up your belongings and get ready to move overseas you may worry that you have forgotten to do something, or ship something you need. Or worse, that you discover it after you arrive in a new country.
2. This next section is only intended to provide some suggestions to put on your personal or family checklist. Also please examine the files in **Appendix 4** for additional valuable **checklist** information from FAO Spouses/Families.

#### USMC IAO CHECKLIST Suggestions for IAO Families Moving Overseas

Living and traveling overseas brings rewarding experiences that can last a lifetime and generate much excitement for families. Preparing for a move however can be a stressful experience too, prone to remembering later the things you wish you would have thought about doing, packing, shipping, coordinating, etc. So, most of us construct and use some form of checklists and plan a sequence of activities. The information compiled here comes from IAOs who have completed tours overseas or are currently traveling and other sources.

The more experienced with overseas moves you become the better your preparation will be. After a move 20/20 hindsight will reveal more that could have been done but considering these ideas may lessen the load. The areas discussed here are intended to stimulate thinking and they represent specific areas that often need to be accomplished and may need to be on your list. In the course of preparing you will likely discover things that you think we should list here to help other families, and we welcome you to tell us about them.

#### About One Year Out:

Begin to familiarize yourself and the family with greater details about the country and region you are going to be living in/ traveling through. Discuss information on geography, demographics, social and cultural issues, political climate with family. If needed refresh yourself and family members with knowledge about the US and our culture in order to answer questions you might expect from people you meet overseas.

Begin to collect, copy, or arrange storage for important papers, birth certificates, legal papers, tax records, powers of attorney, medical, dental records, and school records. Make a list of important names, addresses and phone numbers, account numbers. Update family, friends email and snail mail addresses and numbers. If you have school age

children try to determine if DODDS or private schools will be used and if possible make contact with them early.

If you are at Monterey in school and can arrange it, plan to attend the annual Foreign Area Officer Orientation Conference (FAOOC) hosted by the US Army - with your spouse, if married. A great deal of valuable information about living and traveling overseas will be presented.

## About Six Months Out:

Start thinking about building a budget for expected costs overseas and those bills you may still need to pay in the US during your tour. Anticipate getting your PCS orders about 4 to 6 months prior to departing. Arrange your overseas screening and include any extra medical, dental checks, physicals and eye exams, extra pair of prescription glasses, sunglasses, contacts etc. If you own a home you will want to make preliminary arrangements for property management, renting your home, sale or other plan. Consider what you want to do with valuables, collections etc. that you may not want to ship.

Start arrangements and know authorizations (including weights) for your shipments- household goods, unaccompanied baggage, Auto, and luggage and carry on items. Become familiar with the JFTR, OHA (overseas housing allowance) and MIHA (move in housing allowance). Investigate whether you can or need to ship HHG early for the country you are going to— sometimes it's better to be without some of your things in the US than to be without them for extended periods overseas. Find out if you will be in embassy directed housing where furniture is provided or if you will be receiving OHA and will need your own furniture. Consider power requirements (converters) for any electrical items you plan to ship. And know what things are considered hazardous materials to avoid last minute problems. Plan your unaccompanied baggage – you may want to check on shipping non-perishable consumables in this or HHG. Some countries may tax you on consumables you bring into country. You should be able to find this out in advance. Consider taking items that may be hard to find and ones that your children will need or miss. If you have infants or toddlers this might include a certain brand of diapers you prefer or other baby products. Use caution on shipping books, videos and other items that may be considered controversial in the host country.

Submit your requests for tourist and official/diplomatic no-fee passports. Start with the process with the Marine Detachment if you are at DLI. Ask about needed visas (may need student visa). When you gather your documents to take along consider also taking fingerprints and photos of your family/children. Make wallet sized card for the kids with important numbers and address information in the language of the country. Consider removing all unnecessary ID's, credit cards from your wallet/purse. You may want to exchange your credit cards that have eagles, anchors, US flags for ones that are plain. Carrying your passport(s) in a plain cover may be helpful too. Use luggage tags with your name(s) but you may want to use the kind that you have to open a flap to see your name.



## About 60 Days Out:

Remember to double check on property taxes, insurance etc. if you own a home. If you rent it out make sure your renter has purchased renter's insurance and that your company knows you are renting your home. Your insurance will change. If you are storing a car and it will not be driven you may want to contact your state DMV and your insurance company. They may give you a break on licensing and insurance. If you are shipping a car you may be able to ship some tools and spare oil and air filters in the car. Make sure you have a release from the lien holder to ship your car.

If you plan on getting an International Driving License through AAA.com, or idriverlicense.com or another source, make sure it will be recognized in the country where you will live or travel in. The embassy will tell you if you need a license from the country, or if you will not be eligible to get one (student visa status sometimes prevents this in some countries). It is better to qualify for an in-country license if you can. Many countries do not accept US license but some accept international ones. The International Driver's Licenses are inexpensive (about \$15.00 and two passport photos) but they are only valid in about 150 countries (countries listed on AAA application website), and only for exactly one year (so get it just before you leave) and they must be used in conjunction with a valid stateside license.

If you plan to take a cell phone you may be able to get a SIM card that will work on your phone overseas and be able to keep your current service. If not, you might get your phone company to place your account in inactive status and save you money, avoiding a cancellation fee.

Officers will want to prepare for the Pre-ICT training and briefs. Check with PLU about TAD instructions. Make sure you will be able to access DTS to make your flight and lodging reservations in the DC and Fredericksburg areas, and settle your travel claim afterwards. If you don't already have one you will need a government travel credit card. When you get your Pre-ICT instructions the civilian clothing and uniform requirements and training/briefing schedules and reporting instructions will be included.

## About 2 Weeks Out:

When you gather up the documents you will be carrying you may want to make photo copies of some, such as the inside page of everyone's passport, shot records, other IDs, copies of orders and keep them in a separate location in your carry-on luggage. You can also mail to yourself some items you prefer not to carry, documents, additional medication, spare eyeglasses etc. your family may need in care of the DAO office at the embassy you're headed to.

If you have children and they don't know the language you might consider giving them cards to carry in their pocket in the local language containing the embassy address, your

new address and phone numbers or other information you would want them to have in an emergency.

## More Family Issues:

You should expect some wonderful experiences and some unusual and sometimes unexpected frustrations and the family should be prepared for some culture shock too. This begins to disappear after a few months once you get settled in. It can't be avoided but can be managed. Maintaining a positive attitude is a major key to success and having a great experience.

Depending on their age, children will need different levels of help to get ready and when traveling. When possible give them information about the country and region or let them research some things on their own. Discuss cultural and social issues, dos, don'ts, taboos, dress codes and encourage them to ask questions and address any fears you notice. Some help to acquire some basic language capability can be a big boost. Kids always want to know about their schools and where they will live. Getting enough sleep, play and good diet will help them too. They will watch to see how you handle your concerns. Teach them to always keep you in sight when traveling, especially in public places and what to do if they become lost or need help. Might want to have a family password too that everyone in the family knows.

As a Spouse you may want to build and maintain a list/email and phone tree of your family, other IAO spouses and Marine families, friends, ex-pats and others who you can reach out to when needed. Continuing education (college courses etc.) on-line or working overseas may be an option for you. Working from home on-line may be possible too (one idea we heard about is being a "virtual assistant" on-line). We will try to provide leads or information on these topics on the website when available. When you check in at the embassy you can also inquire about opportunities with the CLO (Community Liaison Officer) and any country or local restrictions.

## Schools:

With school age children you may be able to coordinate early with DODDS schools overseas while you are still stateside. If attending DODDS is not an option you should be able to get information from the CLO at the embassy on schools used by the State Department or international or private schools that are available. Know that private schools do not have to accept all applicants so you may want to make contacts early. Also, tuition is usually due when signing up. Know the cost before signing up and if possible compare with other schools. Working with the current schools is important too in order to get the records transfer process started, or get them ready to take along.

## Pets:

If you plan to ship pets you will want to research the restrictions and procedures first. Some countries require long periods of quarantine. Make sure your pet's medical records will be accepted. If your pet needs special meds that may not be available overseas you may want to ship some ahead so they will be available when you arrive. Remember to bring the type of flea and tick control products that work best for your pet. Check for any restrictions to these. Before you fly with your pet make sure your name and information is both with your pet and on, or inside, the crate you use. Feed your pet only a light meal about six hours before shipping and no water within two hours of flight (except for very hot days). Best to send along easy to open dry food vs. canned food. Remember to exercise your pet before shipping so they will settle down and be able to sleep during the flight.

## Non-Perishable Foods:

You may want to check into shipping in your HHG, or unaccompanied baggage, some non-perishable food items that your family likes and that may not be readily available or as cheap overseas. Once overseas you may look into sources of these items such as [www.netgrocer.com](http://www.netgrocer.com). You may discover that you can have non-perishable food or household items shipped to you that you normally use, and cheaper than items in local stores, even with shipping.

## Banking:

Check on how your bank(s) will be able to support you while overseas. Consider using banks with internet services, on-line bill paying capabilities etc. Some banks can't assist you at all overseas. One bank for example, USAA, will permit you to also scan checks in for deposit giving you instant access to your deposits. Some debit cards won't work overseas on foreign networks. You will want to carry those that are combination debit and credit cards. You may also choose to swap out cards that have Globes, anchors, US flags etc. in favor of non-descript cards to lower your profile.

In your destination country you and family members should try to keep up with the exchange rate to USD to avoid overpaying. Try not to accept torn bills – the next local vendor won't. Becoming accustomed with local banking services will help you.

## Travel:

Officers are encouraged to travel together with their families when practical to enjoy the opportunities to see new lands, experience different cultures and make new friends. The DAO office at the embassy and the IAP Coordinator will sometimes advise when traveling together is not recommended or not possible. When traveling, even with family, you can make choices that present a low profile. Avoid speaking English on foreign

carriers when possible. Check in at terminals quickly. Don't discuss travel plans in earshot of others. Avoid arriving anywhere at night if possible. Keep copies of passport ID page(s) in another pocket or purse separate from the passport(s).

### **AND Some More Useful Things to Bring or Consider:**

It may be useful to bring some suction cups to hang things on to dry, or even a small clothes line. Speaking of clothes – you might want to go on-line and convert the clothing and shoe sizes for everyone in the family into the sizes used in the country or region where you are headed. You might discover that bringing a flat sink stopper is a good idea as well as tweezers, cotton balls, a small sewing kit, extra Band-Aids for the kids, and a first aid book. Maybe some extra wire coat hangers could be handy. A small roll of electrical tape and a small roll of duct tape might come in handy. Taking along some photos of your home in the states, family, pets etc. can be an ice breaker when meeting new neighbors or other strangers in a new country. Taking along a few US souvenirs to give away as gifts at the right time to new local friends can also help build helpful friendships. If you have medicine with you make sure they have professionally printed labels on the containers to avoid possible confiscation.

When flying with kids sometimes it's a good idea to try to get seats up front behind the bulkhead where there's more legroom and room for the kids to move around a bit. Kid's ears will sometimes hurt when landing – chewing gum might help.

## **Summary**

Again, these are just suggestions. If you can drop some of them into your checklist and they help you prepare for your move that is our intention. If you can provide feedback on other items that, in your experience, were or would have been helpful, please let us know.

Enjoy your tour!!

## Chapter 5

### **People, Pets and Possessions You Aren't Able to Bring Along**

1. Whether you have just moved a short distance with your family or across the entire US, or half way around the world – moving ourselves and our belongings is often not a task we look forward to. It's also a good time to look at what should be sold or discarded, instead of stored. Here are some things to consider.
2. Packing up the household, changing children's schools (and their friends), numerous other issues to solve regarding your home, pets if you have them, and the indirect impact your move will have on others, such as extended family and friends, are among the many concerns you will address during your move preparations. But a lot of the impact can be minimized with some carefully planned preparation. Of course, you will be the best judge as to how to help your children prepare and adjust, depending on their age(s). Encouraging or suggesting that they exchange or share photos, snail mail and email addresses with friends and family can get them going in the right direction. Continuing even periodic telephone contacts with their friends may be more difficult and certainly more expensive. Look into whether (VOIP) voice over internet protocol telephone services (Vonage, Skype, Magic Jack, or other providers) may work well where you are going. If they do you may save money on your phone bill too. But you will probably want to take along a small household type phone that you can plug into your computer's phone port.
3. Computer connections with family and friends, instant messaging, including using mikes and web cameras, make staying in touch easier nowadays (even better than phones). But what if the grandparents for example aren't connected or just don't know the ropes. Might be a good plan to spend time helping them get the right equipment and get ready, and get some practice in before you and the kids leave the US.
4. What about the family dog or cat, if you have any? Some countries have extremely long quarantine periods (months) for inbound pets, not to mention strict health and inoculations requirements. This can have real detrimental effects on animals. You will want to check out the rules and procedures for the country you are going to before you decide to take your pets. Some pets (birds, reptiles etc.) may not be allowed in at all. In case of an emergency evacuation US Government regulations do not permit evacuation of pets. In many cases it may be smarter to leave your pet with a trusted family member or good friend if you can. And if you do, you may want to make early arrangements and then do a trial period before you leave the US to make sure things will work OK. And the kids will be more at ease if their favorite pet is

being cared for by someone they also trust. Remember to arrange for long range supplies of pet products, food etc. and the toys they like. Asking for a photo or two of your pet once in a while can be reassuring for your kids also that their “Buddy” is being well cared for.

5. Another issue is those items that you are not sure you will need but if you do you don't want them buried in stored household goods. These are the items (or even important documents) you may want to let close relatives or friends store for you, with the understanding that you may ask them to ship them to you later. There's also the issue of your very valuable things (jewelry, expensive items, collections, weapons etc.) that you'd rather have someone keeping a close eye on for you rather than boxing them up in a storage unit for a year or longer. What about the car you are not shipping? What to do with it or where to store it? You will want to winterize it probably, and remove the battery if it isn't going to be driven. Most vehicles will wind up stored outdoors so you may also want to protect the upholstery from damaging sunlight etc. Getting the car blocked up a little and the tires off the ground may save the tires from damage. Top off all fluids and look for any leaks. Clean the car to make sure no food stuffs are left inside – because animals and insects will find it. Also make sure the registration and insurance issues are looked at. You might get a break from your insurance company if the car will be stored.

# Chapter 6

## Once You Arrive – Getting Settled

1. The big day has arrived and you and family are en route. Who is going to meet you? Where will you stay your first night? What is planned out for you? Chances are that solid arrangements were made and someone at the embassy or the DAO will be there to meet you and family at the airport. Coordinating last minute details in advance will insure that they will know how to find you, and you will know how to find them. Have the POC office and cell phone numbers handy in case your flight is delayed or some other issue pops up. Have a local map and locating instructions handy in case they can't get there to meet you and you have to wing it. Remember to try to get a small amount of local currency to take along before you leave the US, if you can, to handle the first day's possible expenses, just in case. You might even have a chance to find a local map (even on the internet) to bring along. The State Department publishes a series of pamphlets called "Tips for Travelers" for various countries and you may find one for yours by checking on-line (<http://www.state.gov/travel>).
2. Many of you already know that the CLO (Community Liaison Office) will probably be able to provide the most help in getting settled. They will usually have a welcome package of information and someone to brief you on what you need to know about the embassy and your surroundings. They are generally responsible for information about schools for the children, education liaison, any spouse or dependant employment opportunities, cultural, sports information etc. The RSO (Regional Security Office) can help with a residential security survey and related issues. They can do name checks on domestic/household help you may plan to hire. If you do hire domestic help you will have to decide whether to have live-in or day help. There will be an obvious difference in what you should pay them. CLO can help explain local labor laws. Your mail (and parcel post) will probably come through the APO/FPO mail service and be delivered to you at the embassy mail room. For other information you may have already been communicating with a FAO family that preceded you at that ICT location and they may have been giving you valuable information. In some cases if there was a previous family there, but not recently, either we or the DAO may be able to help you connect with them. We may also have collected some written reports from FAOs over time with helpful tips and information about living and traveling in your assigned country or region. If we haven't provided this you may have to remind us to check on this for you.
3. If you have children they will most likely have different reactions than you to their new environment according to their age group and how prepared they are. Younger children can be expected to need much reassurance from parents,

over a longer period, that they are safe, and may have lots of questions about their new surroundings and the people they meet. Spending dedicated time up front with them to alleviate their fears and explaining things may make a world of difference and speed their adjustment. Jet lag and other impact on their biological clocks will likely need your attention too. Not unusual for kids to feel ill for a day or two after an intercontinental flight. Young kids may feel more at home more quickly if they have their favorite toy(s) with them. Older kids may show a need to connect with friends back home by phone or email to exchange news soon after arrival. Getting family phone and internet service may not happen fast enough for them. Getting some prepaid phone cards and letting them/showing them how to make a few short calls to friends using public/friends phone may be a temporary relief for them. Making new friends may take awhile. Most adolescents and teens will have remembered to bring their iPods and other electronic gadgets, but often times they forget the chargers, or batteries. If they don't have one, an inexpensive digital camera might be a good investment for a child to make a record of their new surroundings, and to share later with friends and family.



# Chapter 7

## The Embassy

1. While overseas FAO families are attached to US Embassies in the country where they will be based. Embassies are also called US Missions. The ambassador is also referred to as the Chief of Mission (COM). He or she has responsibility for, and authority over, all US Government personnel, military and civilian, present in the country. You will receive much of your support for yourself and your family from sections or agencies represented in the embassy.
2. The following information is extracted from a CD provided by the US Department of State, Foreign Service Institute, and should help to familiarize you with the role of the Embassy and Consular Posts, how they are organized and what the various elements of a US Mission do, and additionally how the US State Department fits into government as one of the 14 Departments in the Executive Branch.

## Part 1: Diplomacy, National Interests, and Foreign Policy Goals

*Why are there American diplomatic missions and consular posts?*

### Objectives for Part 1

- Define diplomacy, a U.S. Mission's main job
- Identify several U.S. national interests and foreign policy goals

### Diplomacy: a definition

- Diplomacy is the peaceful conduct of business between nation states.
- It includes such activities as negotiating alliances, treaties, and agreements.

### Why use diplomacy?

- Maintain effective relations with other countries
- Achieve foreign policy goals
- Respond to crises
- Defend and advance their ***national interests***

### Some U.S. national interests

- National security
- Economic prosperity
- Law enforcement
- Democracy
- Humanitarian assistance
- Global issues (pollution, landmines, etc.)
- Protecting U.S. citizens and U.S. borders

### U.S. national interests and foreign policy goals

- The United States has written foreign policy goals.
- These goals determine how the United States promotes its national interests worldwide.
- The next two slides list a few of these foreign policy goals.

## U.S. foreign policy goals

- Increase democratic practices and respect for human rights
- Reduce international terrorism
- Secure a better environment for the world
- Promote world economic growth and U.S. exports
- Protect human health
- Eliminate the threat of weapons of mass destruction
- Prevent or reduce the human costs of conflict or natural disasters
- Help Americans who live and travel abroad
- Reduce the impact of international crime
- Control immigration to the United States

## How do we achieve these goals?

- Diplomatic activities
- Diplomatic readiness

## Some examples of diplomatic activities

- Reporting and analysis
- Meetings and negotiations
- Public affairs and public diplomacy
- Consular affairs
- Representation
- Assistance
  - To Americans and citizens of other countries

## Diplomatic readiness

- “Diplomatic Readiness” refers to the **administrative support** that makes it possible for a Mission to do its main job.
- It is the people, the equipment, the money, and the buildings that allow the Mission to conduct its diplomatic activities.

## Diplomatic readiness platform

- Human Resources and training
- Information Management
- Infrastructure and operations

## Part 2: Overview of a U.S. Mission

*How are American diplomatic and consular posts organized?*

### Objectives for Part 2

- Describe a U.S. Mission
- Identify the officials in charge of a U.S. Mission
- Describe a “Country Team” and how it functions

### What is a U.S. Mission?

- A U.S. Mission exists in order to manage American diplomatic and consular activities within that country.
- A Mission includes people from the U.S. Department of State and other U.S. Government departments and agencies.

### What makes up a U.S. Mission?

- All U.S. Government organizations in the country that report to the Ambassador which include:
  - The embassy
  - Embassy offices and other offices reporting to the Ambassador
  - Consulates general and consulates

### Can there be more than one U.S. Mission in a country?

- **Yes:** In a few countries the United States has additional smaller missions called **multilateral missions**. These are special missions to international organizations like NATO or the United Nations.
  - They are also headed by an Ambassador.

#### Who is in charge of a Mission?

- At embassies and special missions, the person in charge is the Ambassador.
- When the Ambassador is absent, the person who acts in the Ambassador's place is called the **Chargé or Chargé d'affaires**.
- At consulates and consulates general, the **Consul or Consul General (CG)**, also known as the Principal Officer, is in charge but reports to the Ambassador at the embassy.

#### The Ambassador is assisted by:

- A **Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM)**, who is the second most senior person in the Mission. The DCM has primary responsibility for:
  - The day-to-day operations of the Mission.
  - Coordination between the various agencies at post.

#### The "Country Team"

- Ambassadors manage the work of a Mission through the Country Team, which is composed of:
  - Heads of each State Department section.
  - Heads of all other agencies represented at the Mission

#### The "Country Team"

- The **Country Team** meets regularly to:
  - Discuss local conditions and Mission activities
  - Review management and security issues
  - Coordinate programs
  - Plan and evaluate progress on meeting the goals of the Mission

### Part 3: The State Department at a U.S. Mission

*How is the State Department Organized at a U.S. Mission?*

#### Objectives for Part 3

- Identify the "lead" agency at the U.S. Mission
- List the sections of the State Department represented at large Missions
- Describe the work of each of these sections

#### State: the lead agency at a Mission

- The **State Department** is the lead agency for the conduct of U.S. diplomacy
- Every Mission includes at least one American from the State Department.
- The State Department is comparable to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in many other countries.

#### The six State Department sections

- Management
- Consular
- Economic
- Public Affairs
- Political
- Security

#### Management Section

The Management Section provides the support that allows the other sections and agencies to do their jobs. People who work in this section work on:

- Human Resources issues (HRO)
- Financial Management issues (FMO)

- Information Management issues (IMO), including radios, mail, telephones, computers, and diplomatic pouches
- General Services issues (GSO), including buildings, maintenance, purchasing, supply, customs and shipping, and transportation issues
- Health and medical issues (MED)
- Community issues—the person responsible for these issues is called the Community Liaison Office Coordinator, or CLO

### Consular Section

- The Consular Section provides services and assistance to American citizens living in or visiting the country.
- It also issues visas to citizens of other countries to go to the United States for work, travel, business, or immigration.

### Consular Section

A Consular Section provides the following services to American citizens:

- Passports, new and replacement
- Registering births and deaths of U.S. citizens
- Registering Americans who are in the country
- Emergency assistance in case of arrests, deaths, or natural disasters
- U.S. voting and tax information
- Social Security and other benefits

### Political & Economic Sections

- Political and Economic Sections analyze political, social, and economic developments within the host country and region.
- They report the results of their finding to the State Department in Washington, D.C. Meet with foreign government officials to promote U.S. interests
- Meet with political parties and non-governmental organizations
- Make recommendations on foreign policy

### Public Affairs Section

- The Public Affairs Section provides the Ambassador and other principal officers with advice on public affairs and public diplomacy activities.
- Administers cultural and educational exchange programs
- Manages information research centers
- Serves as the official contact with the media

### Who talks to the news media?

- All inquiries from the news media must be referred to the Public Affairs Section.
- Other employees are not allowed to speak to the press in their role as employees of the United States Government.

### Security Section

- The Security Section develops and maintains systems to provide a safe, secure workplace for everyone at the Mission -- and safe and secure homes for American staff and family members.
- The badge you are required to wear is part of the security system.
- Provides access controls such as guards
- Provides security for visiting dignitaries
- Provides security information to American businesses situated in the country
- May include a Marine Security Guard Detachment to protect classified information

## Part 4: The State Department in Washington

*What is it? How is it organized? Where does it fit?*

### Objectives for Part 4

- How the State Department fits into the rest of the U.S. Government
- The “Foreign Affairs Agencies”

- The Mission's important contacts in Washington

### What is the State Department?

- Since 1789, the State Department has been the primary institution for the conduct of American diplomacy.
- It is one of 14 departments in the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government.

### Where does the State Department fit in the U.S. Government?

There are three branches of the U.S. Government

- the Executive
  - The President, Vice President, and the 14 departments and other agencies
- the Legislative
  - Congress—the House of Representatives and the Senate
- the Judicial
  - The Supreme Court and other federal courts
- The Secretary of State is the senior secretary among the 14 departments

### The Foreign Affairs Agencies

There are four Foreign Affairs agencies:

- State Department
- Agency for International Development
  - USAID or AID
- Department of Commerce
  - Foreign Commercial Service (FCS)
- Department of Agriculture
  - Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)

### The Foreign Affairs Agencies

In addition, other departments and agencies may be represented at your Mission. These may include:

- Defense
- INS
- DEA
- FBI
- CDC
- FAA
- Customs
- IRS
- Peace Corps

### Who are the State Department's principal officers?

- The President appoints and the Senate confirms the principal officers of the Department. These include:
  - The Secretary, Deputy Secretary, six Under Secretaries, and 24 Assistant Secretaries
  - It includes all Ambassadors

### Who are these senior leaders?

- They include career members of the Foreign Service and Civil Service. (We will discuss these two services in Part 5.)
- Some are appointed by the President from outside the career services and are called "non-career appointees."

### Important Washington contacts for Missions

- Desk Officers work with Missions to be sure that the policy made in Washington is the same as the policy practiced overseas.
  - Those who work in the political or economic sections will probably get to know these people.

### Other Important Contacts

- Post Management Officers (PMO) work with Missions on administrative and management issues.
- Public Diplomacy, Security, and Consular sections also have desk/action officers.
- The Operations Center in the State Department monitors events in the world, especially crises, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## Part 5: The People of the State Department

*Who works for State?*

### Objectives for Part 5

- How big the State Department is
- How the State Department employs people
- How the different parts of the State Department work together

### How big is the State Department?

- While the State Department might seem large, we are small compared to most U.S. Government agencies.
- We have about 50,000 employees worldwide, of whom about 35,000 work outside of the United States. This number includes Locally Employed Staff, whom we'll talk about later.
- We do a lot with little, maintaining 250 diplomatic and consular posts in 180 countries around the world.

### What kinds of employment do we have?

- Foreign Service: Americans and Foreign Nationals
- Civil Service: all Americans, most live in the United States
- Non-career appointees: small numbers, mostly in high-ranking positions
- Contractors: hired to do a specific job for a limited period of time

### Foreign Service and Civil Service

- Many of the Americans who work for the Foreign Affairs Agencies are in the "Foreign Service." These people spend much of their career outside the United States
- Not including military personnel, most other Americans who work for the U.S. Government are in the Civil Service and work chiefly in the United States

### Locally Employed Staff (LES)

- Locally employed staff, sometimes known as Foreign Service Nationals (FSN) are by far the largest group of employees.
- Other employees in a mission might be American citizens working as Rockefeller appointments or citizens of another country, known as Third Country Nationals or TCNs.

### Whether the LES's job is

- Meeting with political and economic leaders
- Clearing goods through customs
- Meeting with members of the press
- Protecting the Mission building and people
- Issuing visas to visit the United States
- Critical to the work of the Mission

### Why are they critical to the Mission?

- They provide the knowledge of how things work in their country.
- They often translate for Americans and keep others aware of what is really going on in their country.
- They have contacts who are important to the Mission.
- The Mission's work cannot get done without them.

### Family member employment in the Mission

- FMA - Family Member Appointment – this is the preferred hiring mechanism for family members
- PSC - Personal Services Contract
- You can get details on each of these types of employment from the Family Liason Office ]

3. Our Marine FAOs and their families are attached to the Embassy and generally are under the supervision of the Marine Attaché or the DATT. This relationship with the Embassy is based on a Memorandum of Agreement between the US Marine Corps and the Defense Intelligence Agency. A copy of the MOA is included in the Marine Corps Foreign Area Officer In-Country Training Guide (ICT), which is provided to FAOs preparing for their overseas training. Ask your FAO to share that information with you.

# Chapter 8

## Schools, Employment

1. If you have school age children, then as noted earlier in another chapter you will want to check as early as possible with a previous FAO family, the Defense Attaché Office, and the Community Liaison Officer at the Embassy in the country you will be assigned to, about the options that exist for schooling of your children. One or all three should be able to give you the most up to date advice on schools for your children. In some locations you may be able to use Department of Defense Dependant Schools, but often you will not. Depending on your child educational needs and grade level the options may turn out to be a locally operated American School (usually offer grades kindergarten through 12), private schools, local tutoring or other arrangements. In some cases the FAO family may be attached to an embassy but actually live some distance, maybe even hours, away from the embassy. Depending on your situation you may even be able to consider home schooling (check with your current school) while overseas.
2. If you are thinking about trying to find work while overseas while your spouse conducts in country or regional travel, then again the Community Liaison Office at the Embassy should be your first stop for information. They will advise you of the local and country laws and requirements, provide ideas and in some cases may even have information on local hire positions within the Embassy in administrative, or office type roles that you might qualify to fill. Or teaching English or tutoring in other subjects might be available. Be careful of involvement in offers for “work at home” jobs. They are most often scams, although a few valid ones do exist. In the Website appendix in this handbook are some sites that Expats discuss their experiences and you may find some ideas and useful advice there.



# Chapter 9

## Family Travel

1. In this chapter our plan is to incorporate some tips and experiences gathered by other IAOs and their families while traveling in various countries of the world. Keep in mind that your experiences in the same areas may turn out to be quite different than theirs, but at least you may know what to look for or do, or maybe some different ways to enjoy your tour. And when you travel remember to give others the benefit of your experiences too by sharing with us and getting them into future editions of this handbook.
2. There are a lot of challenges to making sure your travel is both safe as well as enjoyable. After you plan your trip and before you start out see how much you can learn about the culture of the country or region you will be visiting. What you do back in the states may not always work well overseas. And you may be surprised to find how people in many countries react so positively to families traveling with children. Here are a few ideas to consider – some of these come from US State Department advice.
  - Try to blend in. Tourist clothes (like shorts) might work in the US but not overseas. Loud colors will make you and your children very obvious. Don't wear much jewelry, or expensive items. Men, for example, in Arab countries are not seen wearing gold jewelry or gold watches. Generally only chrome, silver or leather watchbands are worn.
  - Like in the US – try to appear as if you know where you are headed and what you are doing. Nervous or frightened people will stand out.
  - Beggars can tug on your heartstrings but if you don't want them following you make an effort to only to give to the ones who are sitting since they are unlikely to get up.
  - Do not allow people to do things for you that you did not ask for –such as carrying luggage –if you don't stop them they will expect to get paid.
  - Tips (of around 10%) are OK in some countries and not in others –learn which. In Egypt tips are expected for just about anything, but in Japan for example the tip is seen as a handout – waiters, doormen, chambermaids etc. are not tipped –they get their money through service charges on your bill.
  - Photographing people or children in some countries may expose you to local superstitions – some Kenyans for example think if their picture is taken their soul will go into that little box. So ask first.
  - American customs don't always work. In Arabic countries if you are a man and you extend your hand for a handshake when you meet a woman she will almost certainly not extend hers.
  - Public displays of affection can cause problems in some places. China has a rigid moral code and an inappropriate display could result in being asked to leave the country.

### 3. Things that can make travelling with children easier:

- Take along some “Jet Lag” tablets for both you and your children. Might make a difference in feeling better after you arrive. And drink plenty of water. Let the kids walk in the aisles a bit when allowed to improve blood flow. And find out what the weather will be like at arrival to help in your planning. Many people get hit by Jet Lag on the third day because that’s when energy reserves usually start to give out.
- Motion sickness might occur for the kids if the flight is long. Ask your doctor about the most suitable medication to have along. Ear plugs may help too. Chewing gum, if child is old enough, may help also.
- Allow the children to pack their own bags to the extent you can. This gives them some control over things that matter to them. But, of course know what they pack.
- If you can – take along a small first aid kit, and common medications like Tylenol, something for indigestion, and for toothache pain relief.
- Diarrhea can hit you or the kids when travelling, especially in new countries. Try to avoid uncooked meats, raw fruits and vegetables, unpasteurized milk products. Use bottled water when available. Getting lots of rest and drinking purified water will usually help clear a problem up in a few days. In some countries be careful about eating on, or drinking from, pottery that may not have been “fired” in a kiln to the safety standards the US uses. Sometimes they contain high levels of lead or other contaminants.
- Let the children in on the “plan”. If old enough, discuss your plans for living and travelling overseas. The more they know up front the less uncertainty, confusion and fear they will face. And make a plan with the kids on what to do in case of an emergency or if you become separated. Giving them a picture of you to carry might be a good idea too. Make sure they have numbers for the Marine Security Guards, DAO, and home numbers, and any addresses you think they should have.
- Including a favorite electronic or board game or two in luggage might help occupy and entertain older children. Cards, Pencils, crayons and paper or books to read might do it for the smaller ones. Take along some favorite family photos, posters etc. to put in their room once settled. This will help comfort them.
- Try to maintain a normal daily family schedule as much as is possible. Maintaining structure adds to your child’s sense of security. Arrange quiet time for the children. If they had chores to do before while in the States see if that can continue in your new location. Having some responsibility and duties to perform will make them feel included.
- See what kinds of activities the CLO offers for kids and sign yours up.

# Chapter 10

## Emergencies, Medical Treatment, Evacuations

1. Emergencies or the need for a medical evacuation, or even an Embassy directed evacuation could occur at any time, without warning. Medical evacuations are more likely to occur than those related to disasters or threats. For this reason you should have your passport, other IDs and medical records and your families' documents readily available. Putting copies of these documents in a "GO" kit and in a location that everyone in the family knows where to look can save valuable time. As a precaution know where the Regional Medical Centers, or servicing Hospitals are located ahead of time by checking with TRICARE. You can locate information and contact numbers on TRICARE websites (<http://www.tricare.mil> , <http://www.tricareonline.com> and at <http://www.tricare.mil/mybenefit/home/overview/Regions/RegionsNonUS> - note that this address is case sensitive). The DAO may make this part of their initial brief for you. Make sure your DEERS information is up to date. The funding for medical evacuations should come from the supporting regional military hospital. There are different TRICARE numbers for EUCOM, CENTCOM, PACOM, SOUTHCOM medical evacuation coordination. Check and obtain the correct numbers from the DAO on arrival in country.
2. Much like preparing for an emergency in the United States such as evacuation due to hurricane, flood, or other natural or man-made disaster – you should also prepare yourself and your family for the possibility of an evacuation while overseas. This could be due to the same kinds of weather related problems or increased threat level, or an actual situation. While it probably wouldn't take you much time to figure out what you yourself would need in a personal evacuation/get ready kit, here are some things the State Department tells it's folks to think about when it comes to children:
  - a. Possibly a favorite blanket and favorite toy or stuffed animal
  - b. Colored pencils, crayons, paper, activity set, handi-wipes
  - c. Picture of parent(s)
  - d. Small portable music player such as MP3, other small electronic games and batteries
  - e. Several favorite books and a couple new ones.
  - f. A couple travel sized electronic games and cartridges or board games or card games
  - g. Chewing gum, boxed juice, snack foods in zip lock bags
  - h. Change of clothes, socks, sweater, cap
3. You may want to consider putting copies of important papers in your own kit, such as school, medical records, birth certificates, IDs and passport

information, social security cards, orders. You will also want a change of clothes, some emergency food items to last a few days and things like flashlights, batteries, a multi-tool etc.

4. In the event the Embassy declares an emergency there are two types of evacuations. An “Authorized Departure” and an “Ordered Departure”. When an authorized departure is announced then dependents are authorized to depart the country en route for the DOS designated safe-haven (often the US). The DAO prepares orders to move your family. If you choose to move your family without a DOS declared emergency, then you are responsible for the costs involved. In an “Ordered Departure” the family (and most likely the FAO too) will be required to depart. This may end up being in PCS status. The situation will be reviewed every 30 days to determine if the status needs to continue or be downgraded or ended.
5. More detailed information/guidance will be added in a subsequent edition to this chapter as pertains to differences in regions or countries.

# Chapter 11

## Getting Answers - Websites

1. When you are living and traveling overseas answers to family problems and questions are not as easy to find as when you were in the States. If you are attached to the DAO or the Office for Security Cooperation at the Embassy they can help with many issues. Maybe you have already been communicating with former FAO families and are getting some answers that way. If you are living near enough to the Embassy you will discover that the Community Liaison Office (CLO) is often the “Go-To” place for the best answers, or assistance, on many issues. When a question involves liaison with the locals or government they can provide assistance with that. When they don’t have a ready answer they can usually steer you in the right direction to finding a solution. The CLO has eight areas of responsibility: Welcome and Orientation; Event planning; Information management; Spouse and Dependant employment; Education Liaison; Community Liaison; Security Liaison; and Guidance and referral. Next you can check on the internet for information on a wide range of issues. The State Department websites have not only general helpful information, but also links to specific country embassies where you can find more specifics. If you think your children will be attending DoD schools overseas then the DoDEA worldwide website below may give you information you need. For private or other schools the embassy CLO should be able to help you. For medical issues you can get information on Tricare benefits and related information on their site. The “Military One Source” website (listed below) is another great source of information and assistance of all kinds before, and during your overseas move, and for when you are preparing to come home.
2. These are some of the countless websites that may contain many volumes of information and helpful advice that you can make use of before and during your overseas tour as a family.

**US State Department website lists for Embassies, Consulates:**

[www.usembassy.gov](http://www.usembassy.gov)

**US State Department Travel information:**

[www.state.gov/travel](http://www.state.gov/travel)

**Personal World Clock:**

<http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/personal.html>

**Defense Language Institute:**

[www.dliflc.edu](http://www.dliflc.edu)

**Global Language On-line Support System:**

<http://gloss.lingnet.org>  
[www.lingnet.org](http://www.lingnet.org)

**Other language related sites:**

[www.scola.org](http://www.scola.org)  
<http://jlu.wbtrain.com>  
[www.wte.lingnet.org](http://www.wte.lingnet.org)  
[www.voanews.com](http://www.voanews.com) (Voice of America)  
[www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org) (Radio Free Europe)

**Currency Converters:**

<http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>

<http://www.xe.com/>

**Languages of the World:**

[http://www.ethnologue.com/country\\_index.asp](http://www.ethnologue.com/country_index.asp) <

**Tricare Overseas:**

<http://www.tricare.mil>  
<http://www.tricareonline.com>  
<http://www.tricare.mil/mybenefit/home/overview/Regions/RegionsNonUS>

**Sites for information on living abroad/ expat info exchange:**

<http://www.expatexchange.com/living.cfm>  
<http://www.talesmag.com/index.shtml>  
<http://www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/living/index.shtml>

**DoD Schools overseas:**

<http://www.dodea.edu/home/index.cfm>

**Military One Source website, wide range of information and links:**

<http://www.militaryonesource.com/skins/MOS/home.aspx>

**International Drivers Licenses: (AAA & Idriverlicense.com)**

<http://www.idriverlicense.com/index-2.html>  
<http://www.aaa.com>

**Advice from travelers on travel/hotels etc.:**

<http://www.tripadvisor.com>

**CIA Fact Book (wide range of country information):**

**<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>**

3. And if your best efforts to get your questions answered locally or using the internet are still bogged down then contact the IAP Coordinator or Assistant Coordinator by phone or email for help using the contact information listed previously in this handbook. We want to do whatever is needed to help ensure a safe and successful tour for you and your family.

# Chapter 12

## Preparing to Return Home

1. And now the tour is coming to an end and you will be going back to the fleet for a PMOS tour. You have traveled many places, seen so much and learned more than you ever expected. You have either finished, or are about to finish the final trip and your reports, and it's time to get focused on where your family is going next. But it also means moving again, and maybe you have things still in storage back in the states to think about, unaccompanied baggage to plan out again, and decisions to make about what goes back to the states and what doesn't. In any event you will probably be using your handy checklist again. Remember to use some of the websites in an earlier chapter to help you prepare.
2. By now you have most likely been in contact with your next duty station to prepare for arrival there. You'll want to know if you and the family will be in temporary quarters and for how long. Maybe you will need to check on starting housing allowances again or any advances you may need. If you stored or shipped a car you may need to check on new plates, inspections and insurance renewals.
3. If you have employed some household help while overseas they will be about to lose their job unless they will be working for another family. If they have done a good job for you preparing a short letter of recommendation may make getting their next job a little easier. You may be thinking of letting them have some things you don't plan to ship home, including food items, expendables, clothing etc. This may be customary in some areas and OK, but avoid overdoing it for different reasons. You may be able to donate things that are in excess to their needs to the CLO or someone else for distribution to other local families or agencies.
4. When household good shipment day comes be prepared. For many who have had at least one other overseas move the do's and don'ts have been found. If you have children, depending on their age, it may be a good idea to ask a friend to care for them away from the activity. If they are older they can assist you. Most moving companies do a good job and their workers are generally trustworthy, but some are not. When the packers arrive do try to have someone observing them in any rooms being packed. Keep personal things, valuables and papers that are not being shipped, in a closed, locked room if possible. If you do have valuables being shipped try to ensure they are packed in your presence, and that the boxes and containers are properly marked/numbered, that your valuables are not the last thing to go into a container (makes it too easy for someone to find and remove them later). Watch out for boxes that get labeled but do not get an inventory number,



that's a clue! You or a family member should insist on being the one to check boxes numbers off as they are leaving your home and going onto the truck. If the process is becoming too much for you to control (too many activities to watch) have the team leader or the transportation rep (if they are present) to reorganize the effort. Don't allow yourself to get distracted. Watch as they seal your containers. Don't let unsealed containers go. Make sure you check and get a copy of the entire inventory and check the destination paperwork.

5. You will also want to ensure that arrangements have been made to pay final bills for rent, utilities (if you are responsible for any) and disconnection services (if needed) have been scheduled. These are just a handful of things to consider and more will be added as this handbook continues to evolve.

# Chapter 13

## The Future

1. Completion of a utilization tour as a RAO or completion of the In Country phase of FAO training means returning to the Fleet, and to the International Affairs Officer's PMOS. This is necessary under our Dual Track career management system in order to ensure that IAOs remain competitive for promotion and command assignments.
2. As noted in the FAO ICT guide, within two or three months of arrival at the ICT site FAOs should be in contact with their monitors to start coordinating the next PMOS assignment. The earlier this begins, the more likely it may be to secure the family assignment that is best for you.
3. RAOs will receive their AMOS upon receiving their degree from NPS, before they draw a utilization tour. FAOs won't get their AMOS until they complete their In Country Training. And FAOs will have to work hard also to maintain their language proficiency. The DoD and the Marine Corps are developing a sustainment program designed to help officers maintain not only their language skills but their Pol-Mil and cultural level of expertise.
4. FAO families can expect that the future for them will mean doing In Country training for a year, then 2 to 3 years in a PMOS tour back in the Fleet, immediately followed by the "pay-back" utilization tour as a FAO in the region of study – possibly as a MARA, in a Joint HQs or Unified Command billet, or in another FAO billet. The IAP Coordinator will be able to provide the up to date picture for potential and available FAO billets when the time comes for your family to plan the utilization tour.
5. The bottom line for FAOs is that their skills are being increasingly sought after by our senior leaders, as they continue to make extraordinary and immensely valuable contributions to the success of Marine Corps operations all around the world. And all the while, for many, it is the never ending support and sacrifices of their families that often ensure that level of success.

# Appendix 1

## IAO/Embassy Acronyms & Glossary

March 2012

AFRICOM	Africa Command
AIRA	Air Force Attaché
ALUSNA	American Legation Naval Attaché
ARMA	Army Attaché
BFO	Budget and Finance Officer
BTO	Blanket Travel Orders
CAOCL	(Marine Corps) Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (Quantico VA)
CCDR	Combatant Commander
CENTCOM	Central Command (Army)
Chancellery	The operational area of the embassy, not open to the public
CLO	Community Liaison Office/Officer – provides integration and liaison function at post
COCOM	Combatant Command
COIN	Counter Insurgency, Anti-Guerrilla Warfare
COLA	Cost of Living Allowance
Consulate	Provides visa service to the public, assists Americans overseas
COM	Chief of Mission (US Ambassador)
DAO	Defense Attaché Office

DATT	Defense Attaché
DCM	Deputy Chief of Mission
DLAB	Defense Language Aptitude Battery
DLIFLC	Defense Language Institute, Foreign Language Center
DLPT	Defense Language Proficiency Test
DLTR	Defense Language Transformation Roadmap
EUCOM	European Command
FLPP	Foreign Language Proficiency Pay
FSN	Foreign Service National (host country national employed by Embassy)
GPF	General Purpose Forces
GSO	General Services Officer (similar to an S-4)
HRP	High Risk Personnel
IAP	International Affairs Program
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (system of distributing and sharing operating costs at an embassy)
ICASS Lite	System of 16 cost centers used at small posts to distribute costs
ICASS Standard	System of 32 cost centers for costs at medium to large posts
ICT	In Country Training
ISO	In support of
MAAG	Military Assistance and Advisory Group
MAGTF	Marine Ground Task Force
MARA	Marine Attaché
MARSOC	Marine Forces Special Operations Command

MCFPEP	Marine Corps Foreign Personnel Exchange Program
MENA	Middle East North Africa
MILGRP	Military Group (military department at an embassy handling Security Assistance related matters)
MIPR	Military Interdepartmental Purchase Request
M&RA	Manpower and Reserve Affairs
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NSDD-38	National Security Decision Directive number 38, procedures used by an agency to request to create or abolish a position at an embassy
ODC	Office of Defense Cooperation (Security Assistance)
OPSCO	Military operations coordinator in DAO (NCO or Warrant Officer)
PACOM	Pacific Command
PDM	Personal Defensive Measures (“Crucible” training- Virginia)
PNG	Persona Non Grata (relates to Vienna Convention- a receiving state can declare a person unacceptable and cause their expulsion.
Post 1	The main USMC guard post at an embassy
RSO	Regional Security Officer – manages embassy security activities
RMO	Regional Medical Officer
Residence	The ambassador’s home
SAO	Security Assistance Office/Officer
SC MAGTF	Security Cooperation Marine Air Ground Task Force
SOCOM	US Special Operations Command
SOUTHCOM	US Southern Command
TECOM	Training and Evaluation Command

USD	Under Secretary of Defense
USDAO	US Defense Attaché Office
US Direct Hire Employee	US citizen (includes military) assigned and transferred to embassy by their agency

## Appendix 2

### Frequently Asked Questions

(Some of these are also discussed in the ICT Guide)

1. We have already started NPS, when will we know about the start and completion dates for language school. **A.** Within a few months of arriving at NPS the start and projected completion dates for language training will be provided to the FAOs. Nearly all languages are taught at Monterey; however in a few instances (low density courses) FAOs and their families will PCS to the DC area to attend DLI Washington.
2. My FAO spouse will be in a “Special Projects” language course. What is that? **A.** Special projects languages are courses that by request have been tailored to specifically meet the needs of International Affairs Officers preparing for overseas assignments. Some of the standard curriculum has been replaced with material more suited to FAOs. Special Projects languages include Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Spanish and Korean. The course lengths may also differ from the standard courses.
3. We have started language training. When can we expect to get PCS orders? **A.** Web Orders are generally generated about four to six months prior to graduation from DLI. The Marine Detachment at DLI will then cut the orders and provide other admin support.
4. What about passports? **A.** Once your family has orders your spouse can apply for no-fee passports for your family, which will save you money. We recommend getting tourist passports but you will have to pay for those. Whether you rate a diplomatic or official passport (or just need a tourist passport) will depend on what country you are going to. Your spouse can check on this with the DAO/Embassy and the Foreign Clearance Guide. In most cases an official and a tourist passport is all your family will need.
5. I’m hearing that my spouse will get some more training before we go overseas – what is that? **A.** After completing language training (and any dialect training if available) FAOs can expect to receive detailed Pre-ICT briefings here at the Pentagon and at Quantico. If available, they may also be sent to a six day Marine Corps High Risk Personal Defensive Measures course, with a Vehicle Defense Driving course segment at Fredericksburg VA. Families sometimes accompany spouses and stay in the DC or Quantico or Fredericksburg area while they are in training whenever the plan is to PCS from the East Coast.
6. I’m getting ready to plan my household goods shipment and I’m told we will be in “Embassy Directed” housing. Should we plan to ship all of our furniture? **A.**

At stations where Embassy Directed housing is required you will not need to ship in your own furniture. The Embassy General Services Office will take care of preparing your housing, including the furniture either from the Embassy furniture pool or by purchase. In this event you would place your furniture in storage.

7. I plan to drive our car, or a rental, in the country we are going to, and possibly in countries we will travel to. Should I try to get an international driver's license before we leave the states? **A.** The Embassy will be able to tell you (and assist you) if the country will require you to obtain a license in their country in order to drive. Some countries will not permit FAOs and their families to get a license if they are in student status. If the country will accept the international license it must be used in conjunction with your stateside license. For other countries check with the Embassy first.
8. I (and or my children) take some prescription medications. Will I be able to get the same meds overseas? **A.** Depends on where you are going. You should probably consider asking your doctor to prescribe extra medication to take along. When you do your overseas screening that should be a question to bring up. But if you are taking extra quantities of medications with you into a country make sure you have a doctor's certificate for any prescribed drugs to avoid any problems at customs.
9. We are expecting the birth of a child while overseas. What do we need to know? **A.** Most children born overseas to a US parent will have US citizenship at birth. A US Consular officer will prepare a "Consular Report of Birth Abroad of a Citizen of the United States of America" (form FS-240). This is recognized in law as proof of US citizenship. That can then be used to obtain a passport.



## Appendix 3

### Country Specific Tips and Experiences

#### Collected from USMC FAO Reports

1. The following information has been extracted from a wide range of trip and other reports submitted by Foreign Area Officers around the world. The intent of including this information in the Spouse – Family Handbook is to share the views of many officers and their families on the best ways to thrive and survive in your home away from home, and while traveling in new lands. Hopefully you will find much of this useful and will also help us by adding your input to it when your tour is completed.
2. We expect to add more and new information with each new edition. You will notice that some of the appendices appear to be very short. That is because they are often only a small part of much larger trip reports containing other information not needed here, and because in most cases the period of travel referred to in a country may only have been a day or two long. So these brief extracts often can only provide a glimpse of living or traveling in some of these countries. When a report on living in a country is included – it may only be from one previous family and your experiences may turn out to be different. FAOs and their families do not live in all of these lands but travel in these and many more. Please read through each of the country specific appendixes even if you do not plan to travel there. By reading about someone's experience in another country you may discover something you want to check on in yours.



Belgium



France



Italy

## Appendix 3

( Extracted from FAO reports)

### **Belgium, France, Italy travel tips:**

**FAO travel tips.** Recommendations for travel in the Western Europe:

Train travel in Western Europe is very efficient and highly recommended. Travel between Brussels and Paris was only about 1 ½ hours for only 50 Euros. Brussels and Paris have excellent metro systems and a rental car is not needed. Even for travel outside of the metro areas, high-speed trains are available at a reasonable cost. While the Rome metro is dated and less efficient, their bus system was very effective and I only utilized public transportation.



Brazil

## Appendix 3 Brazil (Extracted from FAO reports)

### FAO Tips: Living in Brazil

**Discussion:** Developing a good relationship with the U.S. Embassy and/or U.S. Consulate staff will be critical for a happy and successful experience throughout your tour in Brazil. They provide essential linkages to services that you and your family will need. They are responsible for providing the same services that military installations provide to service members and their families such as: household goods shipment, mail, health services, travel services, passports and visas, vehicle registration etc. The costs of these services are covered by the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) Budget, which every branch of the armed services pays into to support their service personnel and families in country. The MIL GROUP at the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia is a good conduit for finding out about the military-to-military initiatives happening between the U.S. and Brazil.

**Recommendation:** Know who the key players are on the embassy or consulate staff prior to arrival. Beyond the obvious of Ambassador/Consulate General, Deputy Chief of Mission and Military Attaché, there is a host of administrative support staff who you will directly interact with when you first arrive in country. They will help you with your household goods shipment, vehicle inspection and registration, TRICARE, schools and assistance with house hunting. Make contact with them before you arrive so they know you are coming and tell them about any special needs you might have. They will correspond with you and will try to get some things done ahead of time to make your transition go smoother. Sometime after you get settled, speak with the Admin Officer about ICASS and what services you are entitled to receive.

### Issue: CPF card

**Discussion:** A CPF card functions similar to a social security card in the United States. In order to make some of the most essential transactions when arriving in Brazil (e.g. rent an apartment, get a cellular phone, buy a new car, open a bank account, etc.) you must have a CPF card issued to you. Unfortunately, this process takes several weeks, which leaves you in limbo unable to get yourself and family settled in a timely manner. Once the process is started, it normally takes 4-6 weeks before the card is issued.

**Recommendation:** Start the CPF card process as soon as you arrive in Brazil. Seek assistance via the U.S. Embassy/U.S. Consulate or with another American who has been in country for some time and can help you smoothly navigate through the process. Local banks or the post office regularly handle this transaction with no appointment needed.

**Issue:** Searching for an apartment

**Discussion:** Due to the high crime in every Brazilian city, it is required that all U.S. government personnel live in an apartment building that has 24 hour security and controlled access. Renting a house is generally prohibited. The U.S. Embassy/U.S. Consulate housing board must approve the apartment for mechanical safety and to ensure that it meets established U.S. government security standards. If you are part of the embassy or consulate staff, you may choose an apartment from the housing pool. If not, then you must find your own apartment out on the economy. This can be a rather time consuming process since there is not a “clearinghouse” type of system that lists available rentals, such as the MLS (Multiple Listing System) used in the United States. Therefore, you have to contact individual agents to find apartments.

**Recommendation:** Start searching for an apartment as soon as possible. The embassy/consulate has a housing office that can provide assistance. You can start looking, but cannot enter a contract without a CPF card. Good apartments can be hard to find and, ones in good condition, even harder. It can be painful and time consuming, but the quality of life you and your family will have will depend on how much effort you put into searching for an apartment. Bottom line: Be patient!

**Issue:** Apartment contract negotiation

**Discussion:** Once you have found an apartment, negotiating the contract can be tricky and you can get burned, if you are not careful. The owner will most likely be a wealthy Brazilian who normally rents to other Brazilians, not foreigners. So, they are accustomed to Brazilian landlord-tenant laws and contracts, which differ greatly from the contracts typically used in the United States. In Brazil, landlords have more rights than tenants and are obligated to do less. For instance, the majority of the maintenance is the tenant’s responsibility—not the landlord’s. For this reason a lot of apartments are poorly maintained and have many hidden maintenance problems that would be missed without a thorough inspection of the unit. Therefore, it is important to protect yourself in contract negotiations. Brazilian landlords do not have a good reputation for fulfilling their end of the contract. Do not be surprised when this happens. Remember, they are not used to dealing with you and your preconceived notions of what a landlord should be. Try your best to work out any issues that arise with the landlord. If you think you are going to resolve the matter in small claims court, don’t bother. Brazilian courts are backed up for months and it won’t be worth the time, expense or aggravation anyway. A security deposit normally is not required.

**Recommendation:** The U.S. Embassy/Consulate housing office can provide you a bilingual contract that reads very similar to a typical rental contract used in the United

States. Present this contract during negotiations to see if the landlord will accept it. If not, try to incorporate some of its most important elements into a contract that is agreeable to the both of you. Finally, trust your gut. If it doesn't feel right, walk away! Other apartments will become available and, in the end, you and your family will be much happier.

#### Issue: Automobile

Discussion: Depending on where you live in Brazil, a car may be necessary or a nice convenience to have. The government authorizes you to import one car, which will have to pass inspection and be registered once you take delivery of it from Brazilian Customs. Registration can be done with the assistance of the U.S. Embassy/U.S. Consulate and you will receive official U.S. diplomat plates. Brazilian streets, parking spaces and parking garages are quite small, similar to Europe. Therefore, importing a large SUV is not a good idea. Besides, gas is quite expensive. Automobiles sold in Brazil are expensive as well, often 2-3 times the price of the same make and model of car sold in the United States. Selling a Brazilian made car in Brazil when you are ready to leave is a fairly simple and straight forward process. However, if you intend to sell your imported car, there are certain restrictions that must be abided by in order to sell it.

Recommendation: Carefully weigh the pros and cons of importing a U.S. car versus buying a car in Brazil. Try to find a deal ahead of time if you want to buy a Brazilian car, thus leaving the import option open. Due to space limitations and the high cost of gas, smaller is better.

#### Issue: Household Goods

Discussion: Household goods (HHG) shipment can take several weeks or months to arrive in country and pass through Brazilian Customs before you can receive it. When you arrive, you and your family will receive per diem to stay at a hotel until you can get an apartment. However, once you enter into a rental contract, per diem will be stopped and you will begin to receive Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA). It is unlikely that your HHG will arrive before you have successfully negotiated a contract for an apartment, therefore, will be unable to furnish your apartment for some time. The U.S. Embassy/U.S. Consulate does have temporary furniture (sofa, beds, TV, kitchen kit etc.) that they can loan you until your HHG can be delivered.

Recommendation: Keep this lag time in mind when packing up your HHG in CONUS. Take with you essentials such as uniforms, enough clothes to last several weeks or months, medicines, baby items etc. You may be able to get a P.O. Box assigned to you at the U.S. Embassy/U.S. Consulate before you arrive so you can mail important items instead of carrying them with you. However, make sure the boxes are small enough (max 72" cube) so they can easily fit into a standard U.S. mailbag. Oversized mail often gets

put aside due to space limitations on cargo flights and will be delayed by several weeks or months.

#### Issue: Crime and Public Safety

Discussion: Much has been written about the absurd amount of violence in Brazil. Unfortunately, most of what you heard is true. Violent crime in Brazil covers the entire spectrum from muggings on the street, carjackings, kidnapping, robbing entire apartment and public buildings and street shoot outs between drug trafficking gangs and local police. It is always important to be aware of your surroundings, where you are going, who you are going to be with and what time of day you plan on being there. That sounds like a lot to think about, but you will get used to the thought process after being in country for some time. It is rather common to meet Brazilian people who have been victims of violent crime. It's just a part of Brazilian life. A great way of protecting yourself is to not look like an attractive target for a criminal to take advantage of. Everybody is going to know that you are a foreigner (and probably an American), assume you are a tourist with money, don't speak the language and, hence, an easy target. Taking a weapon with you on the street will be of little use and likely to make the problem worse, should you get assaulted. Guns are illegal to carry, but all the serious criminals have them and are not afraid to use them. A knife or an asp will have little effect against multiple armed attackers. The thugs don't work alone. There is always an armed "lookout" to see if you are brave enough to try and thwart the assault or to take care of any passer-by with the good intention of helping you.

Recommendation: When you go out, don't take any weapons with you as they will only complicate matters. Second, take only what you need with you. Leave the expensive watch and jewelry at home and take only the amount of cash or, if necessary, credit card needed for the occasion. Leave the wallet and purse at home. If you are assaulted on the street, the best course of action is to give them what you have. They most likely just want your money and will leave you alone if you give it to them without a fight. This is why it is important to take with you only what you need and leave the rest at home. If you don't have much, you won't lose much. Again, don't make yourself an easy target! This all probably sounds scary because it is intended to be a strong warning. Bad things happen when you least expect it, so—expect it! But remember, millions of tourists and business people visit Brazil every year, have a wonderful time and leave without incident. If you are vigilant, your experience will be the same.

#### Issue: Patience

Discussion: Brazil is a third-world country and has many of the social and economic problems that all third-world countries have. It is common for a foreigner from the United States, Europe or Japan to become frustrated with what they think should be simple and effortless, but instead is rather complicated and inefficient. Simply put, things take longer to get done. This requires an enormous amount of patience and perseverance for you and your family to successfully acclimate to your new surroundings.

Recommendation: Be patient! Know this ahead of time and expect things to take longer than you would normally expect. Whether it is a bank transaction, public transportation or service at a restaurant, things just take longer. Brazilians are an easy-going group of people who are not in a rush to do anything. They will pick up on your impatience and be less willing to help you. In terms of expediency and efficiency, lower your expectations. Poverty, crime, corruption and even climate factor in to “the way things are” in Brazil. When dealing with processes that don’t make sense or people who may seem disinterested; remember where you are and just enjoy Brazil for what it is.



Brunei

## Appendix 3

### Travel Tips – Brunei (extracted from FAO Report)

#### Notes for future travel

A. The only reason to use Royal Brunei Airlines for travel is a lack of alternatives. Although the airline has a good route network, its actual flight schedule is sparse and subject to frequent last minute changes. On one normal day about ¼ of their flights had an announced time change of over 3 hours. Our flight from Kuching to Brunei shifted from 0745 on XX April to 2350 on XX April, creating unexpected additional hotel expenses.

B. Brunei has a public bus system that is comprehensive except for ceasing operations at 1830 each night. There are also very few taxis operating in the country, none with meters. Ensure you arrange transportation from the airport in advance. It is the one country in SE Asia where I would recommend renting a car, although the airport rental car agencies also have limited business hours.

C. Brunei has two cell phone networks but unlike most countries in the region I could not use my Indonesian based phone to make outgoing calls. There are still numerous payphones around the city but all require a pre-paid card from the local phone company.





Cameroon



Chad



Djibouti

### Appendix 3

#### Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia & Djibouti

#### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO reports)

1. **FAO travel tips.** Here are some ideas to get the most out of a similar visit:
  - a. On trips with multiple countries it is possible to arrange for visas for countries without representation in Senegal while on the road. I applied for a visa for Chad from neighboring Cameroon for this reason.
  - b. Be careful relinquishing control of planning a trip. I joined the trip with the Army FAOs with one plan in mind and ended up executing a much shorter trip partially because the trip was advertised before the appropriate Defense Attaches were queried and partially because situations in Africa are constantly changing.
  - c. Rarely if ever could I use credit cards for airline tickets (or anything else). Options for airfare are either to pay in cash or use a line of appropriation data. Airline tickets alone for this trip were four thousand dollars.
  - d. All SSA FAOs should come to Africa with a government charge card waiver in place. ATM machines are rarely accessible and when they are accessible they are of questionable reliance as far as security of your information. The three hotels that accepted credit cards on this trip only accepted American Express. There is really no use for a government charge card in SSA.



China

## Appendix 3 China

### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO Reports)

#### Travel Tips #1

- The voltage is only 220 in China. Beware of plugging anything in from the U.S. (even if says made in China). You may want to purchase electrical items that you need for ICT in the states that are dual voltage or 220 volts. Often times the quality of the items for domestic use in China are questionable.
- Prior FAOs have reported that some locals pick-pocket, especially expensive cell phones. FAOs may want to consider purchasing a less expensive cell phone, which will have the same coverage and prevent the additional headache of worrying about getting pick pocketed.
- Commuting during certain times of the day can be miserable. Traffic may move one block in an hour. FAOs with no kids can live close to the college or near the subway. FAOs with kids, especially if they are in school, may want to find a house near their school. Should one choose not to live near the kid's school expect their school day to be from 0715 to 1630.
- Plenty of English speaking schools are available. The most popular choice for many U.S. expat families is the International School of Beijing ([www.isb.bj.edu.cn](http://www.isb.bj.edu.cn)). It follows the U.S. curriculum and has IB programs for High School students. Some families also choose the Western Academy of Beijing ([www.wab.edu](http://www.wab.edu)). It also has an IB program. Below are some links to other English speaking in Beijing:
  - International Academy of Beijing K-8th [www.iabchina.net](http://www.iabchina.net)
  - The British School of Beijing <http://www.britishschool.org.cn/>
  - BISS K-12 <http://www.biss.com.cn/>
  - Dulwich College Beijing K-12 <http://www.dcbeijing.cn/>
- Due to Beijing's rapid growth these are only a few of the schools that Beijing offers for expats. Those with school age children may want to start the application process before they arrive to ensure a seat for their child. The schools listed also offer pre-K. There are many options for pre-school in Beijing tuition but pre-school can be quite expensive, ranging \$4,000-15,000 USD annually.
- The Embassy will cash checks for up to \$2000.00 USD a day and exchange it for RMB. They will cash third party checks.
- Medical services are abundant and same day appointments are available. Most people use the International S.O.S. clinic.

([http://www.internationalosos.com/en/ourresources\\_clinics\\_china\\_38.htm](http://www.internationalosos.com/en/ourresources_clinics_china_38.htm)). The staff speaks English and the doctors are all western trained. Many immunizations are offered. Rabies shots are recommended since the Chinese don't vaccinate their pets for rabies and children often do not report that they have been bitten or scratched. Doctors can recommend a list of medication for ICT traveling in and around China and will prescribe all the medications with direct billing to Tricare.

- Most Chinese pharmacies do not offer western over the counter (OTC) medicines. The medical clinics sell these OTC but at a cost. Example a bottle of Robitussin cough elixir costs about \$25 USD. Recommend FAOs stock up on OTC drugs and ship them with household goods.
- Most ex-pat areas in Beijing have western grocery stores. A couple grocery stores have web sites to get an idea of some of the items they offer, Carrefour's: [www.carrefour.com.cn](http://www.carrefour.com.cn), Lohao City [www.lohaocity.com](http://www.lohaocity.com). The most common western grocery store is Jenny Lou's which will have a web site soon. Those accustomed to certain brands of dry goods will probably want to purchase them in the U.S. and have them shipped with household goods. Don't purchase any dry good that will expire within the first six weeks of arrival in Beijing, because it can take that long to receive household goods shipment. Online orders can be shipped to the Embassy's FPO AP address. Beware of imitation brands especially laundry detergents. Tide is the most common knockoff brand. Highly recommend to include laundry powder in the household goods shipment pack. Imported Tide it is about \$30.00 USD for a 60 load box.
- Ayis are a great investment. Ayis are many things: housekeepers, cooks, childcare givers, house sitters, etc. Their monthly salary is around \$280.00 USD and many are willing to work six days a week.
- There was an FAO hand-me-down box with some kitchen utensils that can be used until household goods arrive. It is a good idea for all FAO regions. Baking is a new concept for the Chinese. It is extremely difficult and almost impossible to find any baking dishes here. For those who bake make sure to put baking pans in the household goods shipment.

## Travel Tips #2

NORTH EAST CHINA . Here are some ideas to get the most out of a similar trip.

a. This trip took place around October 1st, which is a national holiday in China. Because most people get a few days off for this holiday, many Chinese travel during this time. Train and bus travel are extremely difficult if you do not have your tickets a week prior. Avoid holidays if possible.

b. Without knowing Chinese, getting around is hard. You must travel with at least one other U.S. Passport holder and I suggest that at least one speak and read Chinese. Traveling with a Korean speaker can also help around the North Korean border area.

- c. With Chinese cities changing significantly and quickly, addresses can often change from those listed in guidebooks and on websites. Always confirm an address and get a landmark in case a cab driver does not know the address.
- d. Eat at one of the many North Korean restaurants in the area. There is one listed in the Lonely Planet guidebook, but there are others as well. Choose one that is not too busy so that the waitresses have time to talk to you. If possible, bring a Korean speaker.
- e. Most credit card receipts will print your credit card number on it. Make sure you ask for all the copies at hotels or they will just throw them in the trash.
- f. A 100 yuan bill is often too big for cab drivers and small shops. Make sure to break them when you can and carry a lot of small bills.

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Cyprus

## Appendix 3 Cyprus Travel Tips (Extracted from FAO Reports)

### Travel Tips for Cyprus from Maj DeMarco:

*Summary.* There are certainly things the FAO can learn from a trip to Cyprus, but mostly the island consists of a stalemated political situation and tourism. Cyprus is a very expensive location and will likely require a car rental (see below) which makes the trip even more costly. Travel to Cyprus, being an island, generally requires costly plane travel. Thus, I would recommend that you carefully consider the high cost of this trip compared to the small gain. Of all the destinations I have visited, Cyprus was highest on the list because of its association to both Greece and Turkey; however, in retrospect, given the excellent program of study from FSI in Washington that covered Cyprus, this destination in my opinion did not equal the cost.

### **FAO travel tips.** Recommendations for travel in Cyprus:

- e. Cyprus drives on the left hand side of the road. Public transportation is not very accommodating, so you will likely need a car unless you only plan on going to Nicosia in which case you can take a taxi fairly reasonably. In Nicosia itself, you can walk across the border to the northern side of the city. However, to explore the island, a car is necessary. This will drive up the cost of your trip very quickly. While the actual rental is not terribly expensive, the insurance on the car will nearly triple the price. I highly recommend the insurance; while I am fairly familiar with driving on the left from my tours in Japan, it still requires some adjustment. In addition, while Cyprus does not have as crazy driving as in Greece or Turkey, there is some wildness to it and many of the cities have narrow, busy streets. Finally, should you decline the insurance, they will require a 5,000 euro or nearly \$8,000 deposit on your credit card! This seems rather steep, but given the unfamiliarity of many visitors to driving on the left and the inherent difficulties of Cypriot driving, I can understand why they might require this. To your advantage, Cypriot law recognizes the danger of foreigners driving on the island and your rental car will have a different color license plate on the front and back – locals will instantly know you are the dummy on the road. The highway system and road

signs are fairly good although in the cities themselves navigation is difficult given the Venetian layout of the city streets. Finally, driving to the TRNC may require additional insurance which can be purchased at the border. Insure that you check with your rental car company when you pick up your vehicle what the current policies are.

- f. It is most useful to have traveled to Greece and Turkey first; familiarity with these two sponsor countries will aid the traveler in understanding Cyprus. Note, however, the US State Department forbids entering Cyprus with an Official or Diplomatic passport through the TRNC so as not to seem conferring recognition on the TRNC. (You can enter the TRNC with a Military ID and travel orders, or with a tourist passport on leave.)
- g. Cash and charge were equally well accepted throughout the country.
- h. I had excellent coverage with my GSM cell phone.



## Appendix 3 Czech Republic

### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO Reports)

1. In two regards, Prague does stand out to the western traveler that might not see or witness other towns in Eastern Europe or the Balkans: First, they might take you for whatever you are foolish enough to pay – examples abound, but two will be listed here. Routinely, cab operators will try to rip you off well beyond the rather clumsy attempts you might have experienced in the States. Do ask for a quote prior to getting in the cab. Our hotel, added an extra 200 Euro charge that was never explained but was disguised under two levels of conversion (bill was presented in Czech Crowns, converted from Euros, converted from US Dollars). I was able to resolve this difference (well before submitting my travel claim) by paying close attention to each figure in a manner not often duplicated by more trusting westerners. Of course, I have had the experience in this part of the world that leads me to item number two: Never believe what you are told unless you know it to be true. Of course, this axiom is difficult since how are you supposed to know what to believe or not believe? Raised in the States, we are led to believe that what a sign or person says is what it/he/she means. In Greece, and as I found out in the Czech Republic, it only means what they want you to believe, quite often out of convenience for them. Customer service, in the West implies trying to satisfy the demands of the customer. In Prague I think it necessary to emphasize that many of the people you will deal with were raised under the Soviet system. Perhaps the person you are talking to spent time accompanying mom to the store to only be told that today we do not have rolls, but only loaves of bread. During these formative years, an attitude of ‘take it and be happy or get out’ quite likely set in and this still exists today. This is not, I would add, from spite but from conditioning: I met several genuine and happy individuals who simply never made the leap to problem solving. Approach these situations in good humor and a smile (along with presenting possible solutions as the case may be) and you will find life in Prague (and Eastern Europe in general) much easier.
  - a. *Summary.* Making a trip during the holiday season has benefits and restrictions. If because of your FAO class schedule you are unable to travel prior to your six-month report, I highly advise utilizing this time period that is available. I am very glad to have traveled to Prague in particular as in so many ways it can serve as a comparison model for my FAO country, Greece. Prague is an amazing city that knows its own value. Furthermore, if the axiom is true that you can judge corruption by the sidewalks, Prague is on the right path. I traveled through many

portions of the city and continually found traffic to be controlled (people follow the laws and respect the police) and the streets/sidewalks clean (the government is using tax revenue to better the lives of civilians). There are reported problems with corruption and some crime, but in comparison to some other countries, the Czech Republic is making great strides. Additionally, the airport is modern, clean, comfortable, and bright adding to what is in my opinion a concerted government effort to attract both tourists and business traffic alike. Spared much of the destruction of WWII, Prague has a big asset that it has decided to leverage – its visible and audible history. Most importantly, however, is this revenue seems to be being reinvested for the future.

2. **FAO travel tips.** Recommendations for travel in the Czech Republic:

- a. Prague is a must see for someone interested in Eastern Europe. In many aspects, Prague and the Czech Republic demonstrate what can be done with limited resources but a dedicated national will.
- b. If possible, visits to the embassy and Radio America should try to be scheduled. However, in my opinion, do not let *not* being able to conduct these visits deter you from making a trip here – Prague can be an excellent destination during the Christmas and New Year’s holidays. Prague is busy during this time of year attracting many tourists, so you will see it functioning as the city that it is trying to be: a tourist magnet. The only other time of year that it draws such numbers is during the summer travel season.
- c. Prague has an excellent tram and metro system while taxi service is extremely expensive and often unethical. If you do need a taxi, AAA Radiotaxi I found to always quote fair prices and they have a stand inside the airport where you can query various destinations for an idea of what prices should cost. Pick up the card at the airport when you arrive or flag down a AAA Radiotaxi (not to be confused with just Radiotaxi) for reliable service. In contrast, I would find other cab drivers quote prices often times \$5-10 more than AAA.
- d. Your normal GSM network cell phone should have excellent reception. While long distance rates will apply, I had no problems sending text messages, which are at a substantially cheaper cost.
- e. I was unable to arrange this trip with sufficient notice; however, I did look at the possibility to combining Austria and Hungary into one trip. Now, however, I would suggest one better – Make a visit to Bratislava, Slovakia as your home base and combine all four countries into one Central European trip. To do this, you will need even extra advance planning as the country clearance request requirements for Slovakia are longer than the other countries. The cost for staying in Bratislava is significantly less than in the other cities and travel distance to the other towns is not too far. I would point out that I do not advise this trip during the winter as you might experience the same icy conditions which kept me in Prague the whole time period and thereby restrict you to Bratislava instead.





Egypt

## Appendix 3 EGYPT Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO reports)

### TRAVEL TIPS #1

#### **FAO travel tips.**

FAOs traveling to Egypt should be prepared for aggressive vendors, con artists, and baksheesh-seeking policemen. I recommend keeping money separated in several pockets with one pocket containing a few small bills that can be taken out for paying bribes, if needed, to the aggressive Tourism Police. Driving is not recommended in Cairo or Alexandria, but if you are driving between cities or in other areas, talk to someone at the Embassy about how to handle policemen at checkpoints. At each checkpoint I passed, the driver had to pay an average of 20 Egyptian Pounds for one reason or another to a policeman. For this reason, drivers keep small bills on their dash for easy access. The police made a pretense of some sort of problem, but it was clear to the drivers that a bribe was needed. On the airport road in Aswan, there was no pretense, just a policeman's hand stuck out after the driver paid the toll to the toll collector. I do not know how police would approach a Western driver for a bribe, so it would be best to be forewarned by an Embassy staffer who drives frequently.

At tourist venues, it is best to steer clear of the Tourism Police. They will try to show you around the place or take your picture, often in a side room and then shake you down for money. After I learned my lesson, I avoided them, but at Pompey's Pillar in Alexandria, I was virtually chased around the site by police trying to escort me into the tunnels under the monument where they would have extracted their 20 pounds. It is a game that quickly becomes tiresome.

You can use Arabic everywhere in Egypt, but sometimes it may be best to play the American tourist, as it will give you higher situational awareness when people around you in the market, etc. think they can speak Arabic without you understanding a word.

When visiting Khan al-Khalili, you can use a pedestrian tunnel to cross the very busy street to al-Azhar. If you explore the alleyways around al-Azhar, you will find what one local called the “Egyptian Market (*Souq Misri*),” consisting of various stores that cater to locals and workshops for craftsmen. There were virtually no tourists on that side and I was able to have a conversation with a student from the university who showed me some of the workshops where local craftsmen make the inlaid boxes and other items that are sold in the market. He said that many of the finer crafts made there are exported around the Middle East, but I have no idea whether that was true or not.

It is worth your time while in Cairo to get out to the suburbs to see the difference between the city warrens and the new malls and apartment complexes of the middle and upper class. Al-Ma’adi City Center is a new mall on the southern edge of the suburbs, surrounded by new, glitzy apartment buildings that demonstrate how some Egyptians are able to get ahead in the current economy. While at the mall, in Carrefour you can buy Humphrey Davies’ translation of *The Yacoubian Building*, which can be read in a day or two during your travels in Egypt to give you an excellent insight into the social and political scene in the country. The translation is also available online through Amazon, etc.

## TRAVEL TIPS #2 Bahariya Oasis

**FAO travel tips.** Here are some ideas to get the most out of a similar visit:

- i. I scheduled this trip through a private tour company recommended by civilians outside the embassy. Although the travel office and Carlson-Wagonlit agents can arrange for similar tours, I found distancing myself from DOS and embassy association paid dividends with regard to dialogue and freedom of movement.
- j. Also, the travel office advised against a summer trip because of heat; however, the lack of tourist traffic provided certain latitude for movement and increased rapport with locals and guides.
- k. Cellular reception was never a problem on any Mobinil cell phone. However, Vodafone and other carriers lose all signal and conductivity in the region.
- l. The best places that I found to speak Arabic were with the drivers and guides as the dialogue opened up to social commentary in the privacy of their vehicles.
- m. Driving through the region is not difficult as the main road was paved and maintained throughout the desert. That said, it is advisable to utilize four wheel drive transportation with more aggressive tires.

## FAO TRAVEL TIPS #3 Sharm AL Sheikh

2. **FAO travel tips.** Here are some ideas to get the most out of a similar visit:

- a. Although I found no need in a local guide, a POV is a necessity for travel in this region.
- b. Hotel rates vary in the region, but are generally half-price during the excruciating heat of the summer. Additionally, tourist traffic is lower during this off-season which allows more access to events and activities. However, I would advise making this trip in a couple of seasons to observe the different composition of foreign tourists and local social interaction in the region.
- c. The best places that I found to speak Arabic were in the smaller coastal towns of Ras Sudr and Abu Zenima. Locals in Port Suez specifically tended to be skeptical of foreigners and thus gave limited opportunity for dialogue.



Ghana

### Appendix 3 Ghana Travel Tips (Extracted from FAO Reports)

**FAO travel tips.** Here are some ideas to get the most out of a similar visit:

- d. It was very worthwhile to rent a vehicle and driver in Ghana. The embassy coordinated this through Avis.
- e. The experiences travelling by yourself, with a hired driver, or with embassy staff are very different; each has their advantages and disadvantages. Many more doors open with embassy (DoD) staff but you feel more like you are along for the ride. At the other end, traveling by yourself or with another FAO you get a richer experience in terms of dealing with the populace as you have to do everything yourself. You will most definitely have the opportunity to try both traveling through Africa.



## Appendix 3

### Greece

### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO Reports)

#### LIVING IN GREECE: (items primarily directed to the FAO)

(1) The current system of communication requires the use of a personal PC and email address. I have found that the personal email address is somewhat cumbersome when attempting to communicate with individuals at the @state.gov locations. Frequently, a personal email will get eaten by a spam filter or simply ignored since it does not necessarily contain a real 'name.' We should encourage the transition, as the Army has with its FAOs, to the use of @usmc.mil if we can ensure that this email can be checked from a personal PC. However, if the email requires traveling to the embassy or consulate, this would only slow things down further.

(2) I would recommend to any future FAO with a family, that the FAO come over 30 days in advance of the family to find and establish housing. Doing so will reduce stress and distractions and help get the FAO set up quicker. Indeed, I did not find housing until after 50 days in-country. Also, plan to arrive with around \$10,000 in cash; as this is a cash based society you will go through it fairly quickly especially since you will need large amounts for your rental deposit. Finally, FAOs should consider purchasing a vehicle in-country or ship a vehicle as early as possible to ensure it arrives prior to the family arriving (vehicle shipment is not technically a responsibility of the ESG, however). Arrival time for my vehicle was over four months after the date of shipment (actual transit time was less – it sat in Baltimore for two months before being picked up by the State Department and then it spent a month in Italy prior to arrival in Greece); household goods was slightly faster. I can not say if this is an aberration to the system.

(3) Expect to spend a fair amount of time on the phone due to the above complications. Seriously consider signing on to a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) service such as Skype or Vonage. I have both and their value is inestimable to the completion of my mission. Also, ensure that you have a

printer/scanner as the consulate has limited ability to support you in this regard and ensure that you sign up for high-speed internet access. If you are attending school on a full-time basis you will find it very difficult to coordinate or troubleshoot anything at foreign embassies or with your admin section in the states if you must always travel downtown to the consulate, not to mention that you will pay heavily for parking.

a. Budget: Detailed budget reports are being submitted separately on a quarterly basis. Overall, travel in the European theater has proven to be very expensive and has not been helped by the precipitous decline in the dollar since my original budget planning. Travel from Greece is nearly always expensive with an absence of cheap discount airlines in Thessaloniki. I have found that if you need a hotel at your destination that the embassy is only of marginal assistance. With home internet access you can find deals on good hotels although you will have to conduct a lot of research to find suitable lodging. In Italy, I found a great hotel that usually runs well over per diem for much less than per diem saving \$1,000 on that trip alone. However, you will need to try and conduct travel during off-season periods to get a great rate. If you do not find anything after your research, use of the embassy travel office should ensure that you get a price around per diem. Much of the information that used to be available only to travel professionals is now readily accessible via the internet. I do suggest that you register with a website that allows personal reviews of hotels such as [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com). Also, future FAOs should utilize contacts from NPS/DLI in order to get local knowledge including information on cheap, safe hotels or even better, a free place to stay while they travel. Finally, don't forget to contact the Army FAO office to find other Army FAOs in the region as well as searching the Olmstead Scholars network.



Indonesia

### Appendix 3 Indonesia Travel Tips (Extracted from FAO Reports)

Javi Bala

#### 4. Language

A. I had difficulty communicating with lower class people in Solo – their accents were very thick and difficult to decipher. The same held true in Surabaya and other areas of East Java.

B. A mother in eastern Bali confirmed one reason for increased proficiency in Indonesian in more prosperous or urban areas. Although her son was only through one year kindergarten and the family used a Balinese language at home, he already understood Bahasa Indonesia thanks to regular cartoon watching. She also made a comment about trying to find cartoons in English so he would start to learn that as well. As electricity and television have penetrated further into the countryside, the legal national language has been further socialized even if still not used in the home. This also leaves the most remote and poorest families at a further disadvantage. Their children are likely to have less exposure to Bahasa Indonesia before starting school, putting them further behind their peers.

#### 5. Notes for future travel

A. The passenger trains in East in Central Java were surprisingly efficient. All three of our train trips departed and arrived on time. The executive class carriages varied in age and quality, but were all comfortable enough for long journeys and inexpensive. The schedules and ticket system were also formalized and centrally controlled, greatly reducing the potential for scams.

B. Although the public bus system is cheap and robust, it is also much less formally operated, and fares can vary from bus to bus and even passenger to passenger. They do

make it easier to see the landscape and converse with locals, but are not particularly comfortable or efficient.

#### Kulamantan, Sulawesi Trip:

##### . Notes for future travel

A. My intention was to spend the Lebaran celebration at the end of Ramadan in Manado, a heavily Christian area, on the theory that normal travel would still be possible. The holiday itself fell on Saturday but the city was nearly shut down both Saturday and Sunday. Businesses began reopening on Monday but many remained closed until mid-week. Government offices remained shut the entire following week. In retrospect, I would have instead planned to be away from Jakarta during the two weeks that preceded the holiday, when traffic in the city was much worse than usual, and returned for the holiday itself and the following week, when the city was fairly quiet but traveling elsewhere slightly more difficult.

B. I originally planned to spend more time traveling outside the two major cities I visited on Sulawesi. Holiday closures limited opportunities around Manado and illness forced me to cancel plans to travel outside Makassar. I may attempt to revisit the region in the future.

C. The Dian Group taxi company in Manado has a large fleet of vehicles, uniformed drivers, and meters. Every driver claimed their meter was broken. In one case we did cajole a driver into using a meter, which cut the price of the ride from the airport into the city in half. There seemed to be general agreement among drivers about non-meter fares, and haggling here was not very productive.

#### Timor Leste:

##### Language

A. At this time, Bahasa Indonesia is widely understood in Timor Leste and still used in some schools. Every native Timorese I spoke with could converse in Bahasa Indonesia, a portion of the daily newspaper was in Indonesian, and a significant minority of graffiti and signs also used that language. It is not one of the official national languages and without a change in government policy usage may decline. I did not encounter many people using Portuguese, one of the official languages. Tetun, the other official language, is used by most of the population in daily life, in the local newspaper, and in most signs and graffiti. There are several other local languages and dialects spoken in pockets around the country.

##### 5. Notes for future travel



A. In October 2007 a PACOM ban on using Indonesian air carriers for any domestic or international flights took effect. DAO Jakarta was granted a partial waiver in November allowing domestic flights in some cases. With the DAO waiver, this ban reduces the ability of FAOs based in Indonesia to conduct local travel but is not crippling. FAOs visiting from other countries are not covered and must request their own waivers if they plan to travel by air within the country.

1) Travel to Timor Leste is only possible on 2 airlines, one of them an Indonesian carrier and the other an Australian airline flying from Darwin. With the Indonesian carrier, the trip from Jakarta takes 4-6 hours vice over 15 hours through Darwin. If the ban remains in effect, I would advise FAOs to request a one time waiver from CDR PACOM to avoid the lengthy and expensive route I used.

B. The Indonesian Simpati SIM card in my cell phone worked where cell coverage was available. I could not access some customer service features, such as adding value to the card or checking the balance. I only used the phone for text messaging and even then the rate was close to 10 times the normal amount.



Jordan

### Appendix 3

#### Jordan

#### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO Reports)

#### 4.FAO travel tips.

- a. A minimum of a week should be allotted for travel in Jordan. We spent seven days, including travel to and from Jordan, and were not able to see everything we wanted to. We were limited in time because it was during the Eid al-Adha holiday in the middle of the Royal Omani Air Force Staff Course I was attending. We were able to visit many of the places we desired to see, but were not able to travel to Aqaba because of time. Bethany-By-The-Sea (the supposed site of Jesus' baptism) is worth visiting as well.
- b. Amman is a large and diverse city and requires two to three days to explore the different neighborhoods and areas of the city. There is a large Iraqi refugee population that has settled in Amman and time should be allotted to visit this area. Additionally, the ancient Roman city of Jerash should be visited as well. It is a well preserved city that was quite interesting. The chariot race and gladiator fights in the hippodrome are worth seeing as well.
- c. A rental car is critical for traveling around Jordan. While taxis are readily available, it was much easier to visit the Dead Sea, Petra, and Bethany-By-The-Sea with our own vehicle. Rental prices were reasonable and gas was not too expensive either.



Laos



Thailand

### Appendix 3

#### Laos, Thailand

#### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO Reports)

#### Notes for future travel

A. Train travel in Thailand is popular and unlike Indonesia trains sell out early. We originally planned to travel by train from Bangkok to Chiang Mai but all seats were sold three days in advance, forcing us to fly instead.

B. Luang Prabang is an extremely popular destination for European tour groups and backpackers. Although it can be a good base for exploring the surrounding hill country, the town itself is so overrun with tourists that it is difficult to get an accurate view of Laotian life. There are many hotels and guests houses but they frequently are booked 2-3 months in advance. It is possible to travel to travel from Chiang Mai to

Luang Prabang with a combination of bus and river boat, which might have been a better way to see the countryside.

C. The Indonesian SIM card in my cell phone partially functioned in Thailand and urban areas of Laos. In both countries it took multiple attempts to send text messages. In Laos, I tried to make an international phone call but was unable to make a connection. I would not recommend relying on a foreign cell phone for communication in Laos.



Mali

## Appendix 3

### Mali

### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO reports)

**FAO travel tips.** Here are some ideas to get the most out of a similar visit:

- f. I recommend driving from Senegal and taking more time for Mali. I spent at least seven hours per day driving and though I saw a lot, I could have used more time to interact; most notably I had only half a day to see Bamako and though I traveled to Sévère, I didn't have time to travel less than half an hour west to Mopti. Additionally, there are U.S. programs that deserved more attention.
- g. I traveled with another FAO. I recommend traveling in pairs for the trip. You may be denied travel (by Embassy/DAO) if you are solo.



Qatar

### Appendix 3

#### Qatar

#### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO Reports)

##### FAO travel tips #1:

- Two days is sufficient for embassy briefs and tour of Doha. For travel to military bases or tourist resorts, build in additional days.
- I recommend FAO travel be scheduled for a week prior to a JCET or other exercise involving U.S. forces in Qatar and be followed by FAO participation in the exercise, similar to the USMTM assistance in Saudi Arabia.
- Recommended sites to visit: the new Islamic Art Gallery (Doha), Al-Jazeera network (Doha), the Souq al-Waqif (Doha), the Sealine resort area (45 minute drive south of Doha), northern coast (1-2 hours drive north of Doha).

##### FAO travel Tips #2:

## 5. **FAO travel tips.**

There is not a great deal to see in Qatar, but the few key sites it holds make the trip worthwhile. The DAO OPSCO is an excellent asset for setting up visits, but ensure that you call ahead and be ready to make the arrangements for yourself in case of a personnel change. Doha itself is growing quickly with no freeway arteries. Traffic can be very slow, so pad your travel time for appointments. The Embassy is in a difficult-to-find location, so scout ahead or give yourself extra time to find it.

Al-Jazeera is a must-see attraction for FAOs. The tour takes about an hour. We were able to sit for about 30-45 more minutes with the Head of International and Media Relations to ask questions. You can try to contact the Head of International and Media Relations at [satnam.matharu@aljazeera.net](mailto:satnam.matharu@aljazeera.net) or +974 4896040.

It is also worth your time to visit the facilities at Education City. We visited the Georgetown and Texas A&M buildings and spoke to a Georgetown professor regarding her insights on how well Qatari and other Arab students are prepared for college and how they handle the curriculum. These visits can be set up through the Education Officer in the Public Affairs Office in the Embassy.

Two days is sufficient to get the “Doha experience.” While there are some outlying towns you could drive to in order to get the local flavor, it would be better to do such activities in a more interesting place like Oman or the Emirates. Embassy briefs could be completed on day 1, with a visit to CPMC in the afternoon. A visit to the souq in the evening is worthwhile. There are several decent restaurants and the souq is nice, but pricey. Al-Jazeera and Education City could be visited on Day 2, with time to do a little more sightseeing before an evening departure.



Russia

## Appendix 3

### Russia

#### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO reports)

#### 3. **FAO tips for future travelers:**

- a. Take the train! This is the best way to interact with Russians. The 4 person cabin is a crapshoot, but if you get ordinary people, willing to converse with you. It is a goldmine of experience.
- b. Scheduling your train ride as an overnight one, saves the cost of a night in a hotel.
- c. Don't reserve a hotel if you can help it in Russia. They tack on a 20-50% charge just for the reservation. When traveling off-season, this is no problem at all. It could be problematic in the spring however.
- d. Networking and knowing someone in any of the cities you are traveling to, also saves a ton of your travel budget if you can stay with them.

- e. Find out the schedules for the museums and attractions in advance. In St Petersburg for example, most of the museums are closed on Mondays. Also, a major portion of the Hermitage was closed for maintenance when I went there. This is a planning consideration when traveling somewhere off-season.

#### 4. Conclusions:

- a. This is a very good late spring/early fall first trip for a Russian FAO. The weather was a little cold at times, but relatively sunny and pleasant. The cosmopolitan nature of St. Petersburg, allows a more gradual immersion into using the Russian Language, and the people are friendly enough that the opportunities occur often.
- b. The trip itself was a bit too long. I would recommend 10 days total to go everywhere and see everything I saw.



Saudi Arabia

### Appendix 3 Saudi Arabia Travel Tips (Extracted from FAO Reports)

#### FAO travel tips:

- For FAOs planning to spend time working with USMTM in the Eastern Province, I advise getting a multiple-entry visa, which will facilitate trips to Bahrain with the USMTM team and/or Saudi counterparts. *\*\*This can only be obtained at the Saudi consulate in Washington, D.C.* The Cairo embassy gave the assurance that the Saudi consulate in Cairo could issue multiple-entry visas, but this was not true. Thus, there was no opportunity to travel the causeway into Bahrain with our Saudi counterparts, something which would have undoubtedly increased cultural insight.
- Recommend applying for a Saudi multiple-entry visa well prior to beginning ICT as they require application in Washington, D.C.
-



- Recommend spending three or four days in Riyadh prior to reaching Jubail for USMTM training. This will accommodate embassy country-team and USMTM big-picture briefs (approx. 1 day) and sight-seeing some key points in and around Riyadh, including Dira'iyah, Qasr Al-Masmuk, modern office towers, the gold/jewelry market, “chop-chop” square, and the diplomatic quarter (approx. 2 days).
- If possible, make an attempt to visit the Western province as well. There is a small Marine Detachment with USMTM West in Jeddah, and some interesting sights to see, including Taif, Madain Salah (ruins similar to Petra in Jordan), Wajh, and some WWI sites along the Hejaz railway. Construction of a new economic city is planned at a location near the west coast Marine Detachment.



Serbia

### Appendix 3

#### Serbia

#### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO reports)

**FAO travel tips.** Recommendations for travel in Serbia:

- If possible, try to allow 3 days for Belgrade – day one being embassy briefings; day two should be a weekday when all of your museums and cultural attractions will be open and you can observe a normal workday in the city. Day 3 can be a weekend; many cultural attractions will be closed, but you can observe the population conducting a Saturday shopping day, visiting the cafes, and routine daily life.
- Your normal GSM network cell phone should have excellent reception. While long distance rates will apply, I had no problems sending text messages, which are at a substantially cheaper cost.

- e. I did not take it, but there is a train from Thessaloniki to Belgrade twice a day morning and night. If you have enough time, consider the day train (depart roughly 0700 and arrive 1900) in order to see more of the countryside.



Singapore



Malaysia

### Appendix 3

## Singapore, Bantam Malaysia

### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO reports)

#### Notes for future travel

The ferry route from Batam to Singapore is a good alternative to a direct flight. The ferry (and bus) from Georgetown, Penang to Medan, North Sumatra is not a good option. Advertised at 4 hours, the boat took 6 hours just to cross the Straits of Malacca with an additional 3 hours for the bus leg, immigration lines, and delays. Although the passenger-only boat was in surprisingly good condition, the crossing itself was rough and my wife and I spent half of it vomiting profusely.



Spain



Morocco

### Appendix 3 Spain, Morocco Travel Tips (Extracted from FAO Reports)

#### **FAO travel tips.**

Train travel is the easiest mode of transportation between Morocco's major cities. Train schedules can be found at <http://www.oncf.ma/>. Traveling FAOs must adhere to a list of approved hotels that can be attained through the ICT FAO in Rabat. An excellent book to read while traveling in Morocco is *Leo Africanus* by Amin Maalouf. The book is written from the perspective of a Granadan who is expelled from Andalusia into Fes in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but the book offers subtle insights into parallels between this history and current political events in the Arab world.



Tajikistan

## Appendix 3

### Tajikistan

#### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO reports)

**FAO travel tips.** Here are some ideas to get the most out of a similar visit:

**(primarily directed to FAOs)**

**First I want to emphasize** that future Persian Farsi FAO's should attempt to obtain Dushanbe as an ICT location. It is far superior to Baku in terms of language usage, and immersion opportunities. 12 months in Dushanbe would be incredibly beneficial. Conduct travel during the months of December, January and February to avoid the power outages and the cold of the winter. PLU should begin making plans to secure Dushanbe as an ICT location for the future. I believe it is vital to creating a fully trained FAO.

- a. Embassy Briefs are worthwhile and should be done shortly after arrival.
- b. Public transportation is the way to go. Buses, Mashrootka's, and shared taxi's provide an insight into everyday life that one would otherwise miss if driving or taking private taxi's.
- c. Try to get to Dushanbe early on during ICT. It really is an immersion environment, and humbling in the fact that understanding others is so difficult.
- d. Walking the streets at night is a bit unsettling. The streets in downtown are barren and outside of the immediate city center are very dark and not highly populated. Although crime rates are low, young intoxicated men can be seen on otherwise empty night streets, bottom line: Take a cab after 9 or 10 pm.
- f. Plan to spend some time in Khojand, and travel around the country, the shared taxi trip from Dushanbe to Khojand has been the highlight of my ICT experience to this point. It takes a little extra planning to travel around but is doable.
- g. The Central Asia Lonely Planet Guide book is a great place to start if wondering how to spend your time in Tajikistan.
- h. Obtaining a tutor is not difficult. Coordinate with the embassy prior to your arrival, they will be able to point you in the right direction.



Turkey

## Appendix 3

### Turkey

### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO reports)

#### FAO Travel Tips #1

- a. In addition to Ankara, Izmir and Istanbul, I would also suggest trying to plan Cappadocia into a trip to Turkey. Though I did not visit it, those I met that live there say that it is a great place to visit, and worth the trip.
- b. Flying from Ankara to Izmir really worked out great, but if I could do it again I would choose to drive from Izmir to Istanbul, that way you are afforded the opportunity to drive to Troy and Gallipoli on your way to Istanbul. I was told

Troy is only worth the effort if you are already driving by it. If you cannot drive from Izmir to Istanbul, taking a day to drive out to Gallipoli is worth the effort. November and December are not the best times to go there as most everything (tourist wise) is boarded up for the winter.

- c. Save Istanbul for your last stop and give yourself more time there as well. It is the largest of the three cities I visited, and there is a lot to see and do. This would be a great place to take a spouse; especially if they like to shop. There are many museums to choose from, palaces to wander through and Mosques to visit.
- d. An absolute must while in Ankara is Anitkabir, Ataturk's Mausoleum. You cannot fully understand what this man means to the country without a visit to his final resting place. There is also a Museum there that is most impressive. It is grander, I think, than Mao Zedong's Mausoleum in Beijing. I also highly recommend walking as much as you can around Ankara. I felt this was the best way to get a feel for the city. It was clean and I always felt safe on the streets there.
- e. Places you must visit in Istanbul include: Hagia Sophia or Ayasofia ( Byzantine Basilica turned Mosque turn Museum), The Blue Mosque (across from Hagia Sophia and the only Mosque with 6 minarets... you do not have to go in this one though), Galata Tower (gives you the best view of the city), Suleymaniye Mosque (I believe it is the largest Mosque in Istanbul and needs to be seen from the inside), Grand Bazaar and Misri Bazaar or the Spice Bazaar (even if you do not like to shop, this is the largest covered bazaar in the world and although haggling is necessary it is not as bad as negotiating over prices at Khan el-Khalili in Cairo).

## **FAO Travel Tips #2**

**FAO travel tips.** To attain maximum benefit from a visit to Turkey, MENA FAOs should consider teaming with ICT FAOs or Olmstead scholars in Turkey and traveling outside the main urban and tourist areas (Istanbul, Ankara, and the west coast). FAOs may want to research travel to Arabic-speaking areas in the south. Check with the DAO regarding the liaison officer to the Turkish Special Forces in the southeast as a potentially rewarding visit. In Ankara, ensure you visit the OMC.

In Istanbul, if you are staying on or near Taksim Square, you can use the inexpensive Havaş (pronounced Hawash) Buses to get to and from either of Istanbul's two airports. Ask specifically for the Havaş line, as the staff at the "information" counter will try to pressure you into taking another shuttle that would have cost 90 lira for four people. During daytime hours, a taxi should cost only 30-40 lira (metered). It will be more at night due to higher rates. The Havaş bus is only 10 lira. If you are traveling light, you can ride the train/metro to Sultanahmet or Taksim, but there are 2-3 transfers and the cars get very crowded, which would be difficult with large luggage. Make sure you check out

a current metro map (linked above) as most guide books and maps do not show recent sections that connect the lines on the European side.

### **Travel Tips #3**

#### **5. FAO travel tips.** Recommendations for travel in Turkey:

- a. I conducted this trip exclusively via train travel. Two trains depart daily for Istanbul from Thessaloniki although at the time I purchased my tickets, you have to look under K for Constantinople to find the train to Istanbul. I have heard that Greece might soon modify this and finally recognize Istanbul as the proper name. The trains leave around 0800 and 2000, each taking about 12 hours according to the schedule. I opted to take the night-time sleeper car and this was not a good choice. While the train is comfortable, you will arrive at the Greek border around 0200 and depart around 0300 from passport control. Then, about 0330 you arrive at the Turkish border and wait again for an hour before you continue your journey. Hoping to arrive early morning refreshed from a good night's sleep, my first day in Istanbul required several hits of Turkish coffee. The trip back from Istanbul was the same harassment package.
- b. I read that most trains in Turkey are rather poor with the exception of the Istanbul-Ankara express. Again, you depart Istanbul in the evening and arriving in Ankara in the morning via sleeper car. This train, in contrast to the Greek-Turkish line, is highly recommended and I experienced no problems whatsoever. The price was very reasonable although you can only make reservations about two-weeks out and the train is very popular, so do try for reservations. You can contact most any travel agency in Istanbul (or Ankara, I suspect) to make the arrangements as I found the website difficult to navigate. I did have to then drop by the travel agency in Istanbul to pay for and pick up my tickets. Be advised that you will depart from the train station on the Asian side of Istanbul while the train from Greece arrives and departs at the train station on the European side. Travel between Europe and Asia in Istanbul is quick and easy if you use the frequent ferries. I don't recommend a taxi which is slow and very expensive.
- c. I used all of the forms of public transportation in Istanbul and it was a bit disjointed, although good enough. All public transportation can be paid for via a single key (that you can get at most any large station) which you press into your bus, ferry, tram, or subway. This ease of payment makes up for the slightly disjointed system, although you can get most anywhere with it in good time. Taxis are very expensive and driving is slow and Balkanized, so you might as well just use public transportation. However, getting out of the city can be difficult with public transportation. I did not use the national bus line to get around the country, although I have heard better things about it compared to the train system (with the exception of the Ankara-Istanbul Express).
- d. I found many places willing to take credit cards, although cash is preferred. Still, you should be able to charge most anything you want to purchase, at least in the

cities. I suspect that you will need to bring cash to the more rural areas. I found ATMs plentiful in this respect.

- e. I had excellent coverage with my GSM cell phone.



Albania



Montenegro



Serbia



Kosovo



Croatia

### Appendix 3

### Western Balkans

### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO reports)

**FAO travel tips #1.** Recommendations for travel in the Western Balkans:

- f. Driving is the only way to see this part of the world; you will cheat yourself if you only fly to the capitals. While you will spend a fair amount of time on the road, and



pray for your life on occasion, public transportation is difficult when it exists at all. Many of best encounters will be the random ones you come across on the road. Had I not driven in Bosnia, I would have missed the gas stations that have a Statue of Liberty in front of them, with a sign to New York (7200 KM)! It is highly doubtful that you will know all the local languages, but English will get you by. Knowledge of some German, Italian, or French is also highly advantageous.

- g. I did get a flat (unfixable) while in Albania which you should expect on this drive; the roads are rough at times. This brings me to another one of those random encounters – I was fortunate enough to breakdown right in front of a ‘car wash.’ This isn’t the advanced system we think of, but some middle-aged guys with few opportunities other than a hose and scrub brush. They immediately jumped in to help seeing that I was dressed in casual business attire. Once my spare was on, they even cleaned my car, which considering I was driving in Albania, it was quite dirty. The positively refused payment – it is help and freely given. We Americans generally try to respond to situations by reaching into our pockets, but many areas of the world don’t think the same way. Since OIF I have generally tried to travel with a pack of cigarettes at all times – I have found in many instances that people will help and refuse payment. However, I have never seen one of these men refuse a cigarette as a method of thanks!
- h. The biggest downside to a driving trip is the time requirement. Taking the ferry saved a great deal of time, but with three-weeks of intensive travel, I barely began to see all of what is present. At one time I envisioned a much larger road trip, a circle from Greece through these same countries, and then back down through Hungary, Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria. This would then become a minimum of six weeks of travel and become very expensive.
- i. Even at three weeks, there were periods of cultural fatigue that I encountered. Day-after-day of new languages but similar political and economic problems can wear you down. Netflix is a great solution to this – prior to my departure I built up four movies to take on the road with me. On those nights where I just didn’t want to hang out in yet another cultural exploration, after I returned from dinner I popped a movie in my DVD player. You will need a break sometimes.

#### FAO Travel Tips #2:

From FAO report –Zagreb

- (1) “Western Balkans (16-25 Oct 06): During a 10-day period I visited Montenegro, Bosnia, Serbia and Kosovo, which is still a part of Serbia. Since Croatia shares borders with all three, traveling from one to the other was more efficient than continually returning to Zagreb. It also allowed me to compare cultures and dialects (Serbo-Croatian is the primary language spoken in all these places, even though it is called “Bosnian,” “Montenegrin,” etc. depending on location) while memories of the neighboring countries were still fresh. Driving is the most efficient means of transportation in order to most effectively appreciate the terrain and understand how it facilitated the Serbian

siege of Sarajevo and cut off cities in mostly-Serbian eastern Bosnia, such as Višegrad. FAOs should avoid visiting these countries during late June if possible, as the end of June marks Serbia's defeat by the Turks at Kosovo in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in 1914, and the Croatian declaration of independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. I recommend traveling during late fall, when weather still permits unrestricted road travel.

- (2) "For future FAOs, I recommend driving to all countries that border Croatia, since it allows one to see that much more of Croatia, as well as the similarities/differences in border areas of both countries."
- (3) "I would recommend to any future Eastern Europe FAOs to be sure to include a USEUCOM/MARFOREUR trip in a travel itinerary; the earlier in the a FAO's ICT that he can schedule the "Stuttgart tour," the better, since the operational background will help enable him to be able to ask the right questions for follow-on travel."
- (4) "FAOs must understand that getting CONUS support while forward deployed is often difficult and delayed. I would recommend to any future FAO with a family that the FAO come over 30 days in advance of the family to find and establish housing, register for diplomatic permits, and other administrative tasks. Doing so will reduce stress and distractions and help get the FAO set up more quickly. Also, FAOs should ship a vehicle to ICT site as early as possible to ensure it arrives prior to family arrival."
- (5) "One technical recommendation for FAOs is to take a scanner with them and ensure that their housing be equipped with high-speed Internet access, as embassies do not always have the necessary equipment to support USMC reporting requirements (such as scanned documents vice faxes). Hi-speed Internet at home will also enable use of Voice Over Internet Protocol or Skype, extremely cheap and easy-to-use Internet phone systems good for contacting support units back in CONUS or American embassies in order to coordinate travel.
- (6) "Future FAOs should utilize contacts from NPS/DLI in order to get local knowledge including information on cheap, safe hotels or even better, a free place to stay while they travel. Also, when contacting various embassies about visits, be sure to inquire about the presence of Olmsted Scholars, whose mission and lifestyle is very similar to that of a FAO. Making contact with Olmsted scholars and NPS classmates in Bosnia, Germany, Greece, Romania and Serbia helped cut my costs by more than \$1,500. Future FAOs should be aware that while airline travel around Eastern Europe is relatively cheap, car rental and lodging are expensive, although arranging lodging through the U.S. Embassy in the city being visited ensures lodging at or below per diem rates."



Oman



United Arab Emirates

### Appendix 3

#### Arabian Peninsula

#### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO reports)

6. **FAO points of interest.** Here are some ideas to get the most out of a similar visit:
  - a. Oman is most likely a two-week trip at a minimum. The first week would allow visits to the most populated coastal cities, and the second week would be allotted for inland exploration and rural visits. For this, an SUV is essential.
  - b. When visiting the Musandam Peninsula, which is not geographically connected to Oman, I advise making the visit from Ras Al-Kheima while in the U.A.E. This

would avoid the hassle of obtaining insurance and a permit to cross into U.A.E. from Oman as well as eliminate the immigration taxes.

- c. The best places that I found to speak Arabic were in the gold markets of the various kingdoms as well as the inland Souks, specifically those of Oman in Nizwa. One piece of advice at larger tourist hotels is to pay attention to name tags as they often indicate the workers' home country. This eliminates the need to guess who speaks Arabic and allows for quicker exchange in the target language.



Lithuania



Latvia



Estonia

### Appendix 3

### Baltic Region

### Travel Tips

(Extracted from FAO reports)

#### Baltic Region FAO Travel Tips:

- a. I conducted this particular trip during the winter and a summer trip would be highly recommended.

- b. Be aware that any travel to the Baltic regions will probably fly through Riga, with a customs stop required there even if it is not your final destination, until FlyLAL returns to normal operations.
- a. I took a Eurolines bus from Vilnius to Riga and later from Riga to Tallinn. The buses between capital cities are very comfortable and inexpensive. However, there are customs checkpoints at the borders and one must remember to have their passport on their person. I almost caused a minor international incident when I realized my passport was in my suit pocket which was in my luggage... locked in a compartment underneath the bus. I had to get out of the bus and pull out my garment bag on the side of the slushy and snowy highway on the Latvian border. I also found out that my Ukrainian Interior Ministry Identification card is an insufficient and rather suspicious form of travel documentation when crossing the Latvian border.
- b. Most museums in the Baltics are closed on Mondays and Tuesdays because they operate throughout the weekend.
- c. It is apparently illegal to walk on the grass in Riga parks, even with six inches of snow on the ground. Stick to the sidewalks unless you are looking to have an unpleasant conversation with the local police.



## **Appendix 3**

### **Tblisi Georgia**

### **Travel Tips**

**(Extracted form FAO reports)**

**Tblisi Georgia - FAO travel tips.** Here are some ideas to get the most out of a similar visit:

- a. As with every country, embassy Briefs are worthwhile and should be done shortly after arrival. Go prepared, with a list of questions and spend at least 3-4 hours researching the main issues before arriving.
- b. Public transportation is the way to get there; the overnight train from Baku takes about 12-14 hours and is very efficient, albeit slow.
- c. Public transportation in Georgia is a bit nerve-racking. The signs are so foreign, that one could get easily lost on the Metro, so make sure you have a good map

and know exactly where to get on and off, hence ending up in the far reaches of Tblisi are quite possible. I did not try Mashrutkas.

- d. Walking the streets at night is not unsafe, although many places appear to become quite barren after 9 pm. The Old Town area and Pushkin Street has some good night life, as the famous Georgian hospitality and free spirit becomes so apparent; so enjoy.
- e. Going to Gori was well worth the trip, although the Stalin Museum was dark and cold, getting out, seeing the countryside and another city is highly recommended. Had I had more time I would have liked to go the port city of Poti to get a look at the shipping capabilities and its potential use for U.S. and NATO forces.

## **Appendix 4**

### **Feedback and Advice**

#### **From**

### **FAO Families**

1. Appendix 4 contains both generic and specific information, tips, checklists and real experiences collected from FAO families from their travels overseas and/or while living in a foreign country. We will continue to add more content in this section as we receive it. For the most part this information is constructed by individual spouses or families, and represents their personal observations. Your experiences in your country may differ some or greatly from what other report. In any event these are genuine efforts at providing new FAOs and their families with as much sound advice and good tips for planning and living abroad as is possible.
2. Each appendix suffix in this section is intended to focus on a specific country where possible. Some will include travel within an assigned region as well. If you come across information that has changed or is no longer applicable then please

inform the IAP Coordinator or the assistant so that this guide can remain up to date.



Turkey

## **Appendix 4A Turkey (Checklist)**

### **FROM A USMC FAO SPOUSE TO AN UPCOMING USMC FAO SPOUSE...**

*I wanted to create a checklist of sorts for future spouses going through the process of moving overseas. I fully realize each move is unique due to the various areas in the world, your family size, expectations, etc. but there are many similarities from family to family and I hope this comprehensive outline will at least get you started, and even more importantly, empower you to ask questions that are unique to your family. Good Luck and remember a Marine does their mission best when their family is in a state of family readiness!"*

*So... you are in the middle of DLI training... you realize your Marine is going to make it through this intense course... now what?*



### ***6 months out:***

1. Go get yourself a book about the country! *Lonely Planet* is a really good one because it has detailed information about the little towns in the country which you will most likely be going through. In your spare time, read it and get excited about where you are going!
2. Go get your passport pictures taken for passports, visas, ID badges, etc. You will need about 25 each, ask for more for your spouse. They are FREE! Go to DLI. There is a man who does this for you and your family. Make an appointment with him and go with everyone (including your spouse) at once so it is done! Ask for your pictures right then.
3. Walk next door to the TMO office and process your official FREE passports. Depending on the country you are going to, the passports may be diplomat passports (black), some are official passports (brown), some are unofficial passports (blue with a stamp in the back). Make sure you have an idea of what you are supposed to get... but ultimately the State Department decides when processing. \*\*\*Prior to going, get the paperwork on-line (state department website), actually fill it out on-line and then print (3 copies: one for TMO, one for your tourist passport application, one for your records). \*\*\* So, now you have your application, your passport pictures, bring your birth certificates, and social security cards. You are set! (OH! YOU CAN DO THIS WITHOUT ORDERS! They will just hold your passports at the office until you get your orders. Your spouse can then pick them up.)
4. Go to the DLI Health Clinic on a walk-in basis (Friday afternoons seem to be best) and get your vaccinations. This is a process because many of the immunizations are a series of shots, taken every couple of months. You do NOT need orders to do this. Go to the State Dept. website for your country to view your country's current vaccination list. \*\*\*If you have small children, you will need a written letter from your PCM stating that the DLI Health Clinic can administer the vaccinations and that your child is in good health.\*\*\* *Remember to get yours too... I did not have any records at all, so they just started over... it doesn't hurt as much as you remember!!!*
5. Once you get your Birth Certificates back from getting the official passports (or if you have more than one copy, which I highly recommend), go to the PACIFIC GROVE POST OFFICE to process your TOURIST passports. You can call ahead and make an appointment for Saturday morning so all can be present! *(This is great when you have little children as both parents must be present)*\*\*\*Bring your checkbook with lots of checks in it!\*\*\* They will be around \$100.00 each... the lady is great and will walk you through the writing of them all individually. Again, come with your filled out applications that you printed off earlier, birth certificates, picture ID, passport photos, and Social Security cards.
6. Get your OVERSEAS SCREENING FORMS. Have your spouse go to the Navy Medical Building on DLI (next to the Health Clinic) to get the following forms: 2807, 1300, 1302. You will need these for each member of your family.
7. Make an appointment with your PCM for yourself and your children (probably best on separate appointments since you will have to have a PAP if you are female). Tell them when making the appointment that you need an 'overseas

screening'. They usually know what this entails. Basically, for the children, it is just a check-up and they are signing a form stating your child is fit to move overseas. Same goes for you. If you have health complications, then this might entail more. \*\*\**Make sure you get a copy of the actual Well Baby check form from your doctor too. I do not know why, but you have to have this along with the forms the doctor is filling out!*\*\*\*

8. Make an appointment to do the same thing with your dentist. Even the baby of the family needs this check-off. \*\*\**If you have dental problems, i.e.: cavity, old crown that needs fixed, etc... some dentists will insist that these get fixed before they will sign off on your overseas screening. This can be costly, so be prepared.*\*\*\*
9. Make sure your spouse does his/her overseas screening too via the Health Clinic and Dental Clinic at DLI (She/he needs those copies of the doctors check sheet too)
10. Once all family members have completed the Overseas Screening forms, **MAKE COPIES OF EVERYTHING!!!** *I have heard of many Overseas Screening forms getting lost. Not something you want to do over again, especially if you have a big fam!* Make a nice and neat package and send it off with your spouse to drop off at the Navy Medical Building.
11. Legal – Make an appointment with the DLI Legal (get the number on-line... by the way, NPS does not do this) and go with your spouse together. Update your wills and get a Power Of Attorney for PCS move out and in (sometimes the Marine is on TAD in DC when the movers come), and a General POA for whatever may come up (*we did ours for the length of the ICT period*). The forms are there and they are quick and easy. It will be a 3 appointment deal with both of you present. Fill out the forms to update wills on-line before going. 1<sup>st</sup> appt. is to give the forms and discuss, 2<sup>nd</sup> to review and proofread wills and OK the final drafting. 3<sup>rd</sup> is for sign off and pickup the wills.
12. Go to your country's Embassy website and find the CLO (Community Liaison Officer). E-mail her/him and tell them who you are and that you would like a Welcome Packet e-mailed or mailed to you. Also, you can request a sponsor of sorts that you can ask questions to, but really, the CLO knows most of your questions, and it is their job to answer them!
13. Go through your credit reports and make sure all is good with them. You can request a free copy from all three bureaus on-line once a year. Take advantage of this. Also, you can mail them a written letter stating you are moving overseas and would like an "Active Duty Alert" put on your report. This is very helpful since when you are overseas, you don't have to worry that someone is buying a car in your name, etc. They will have to call you first and ask your permission before any major purchase or credit card is opened in your name.
14. If you take medication regularly, you will need to sign up with Tricare's Mail-In Pharmacy Program. The paperwork is on-line and you will need separate forms for you and your spouse if they use meds too. Get this started early and delivered to your stateside address first, then you can call to change your address when you get your overseas address.

15. Renew all Military ID's! If you or your spouse's ID are going to expire while overseas, make sure you get it renewed! You will have to have your spouse present with you to do this!!! You can go on a walk-in basis (*Friday mornings seem to be best at DEERS*) **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO HAVE ID CARDS FOR YOUR YOUNG CHILDREN OVERSEAS!** Just like the states, they will fall under you.
16. If you are taking a car overseas, or buying one overseas... Get a STAR card account! You will need this to buy gas overseas. It is a crazy system that is used to give you tax free gas and also to monitor your gas intake... it is a bit of a hassle, but do it because gas is VERY expensive overseas! The easiest way is to go on-line and print off the application. Fill it out and take it to the Exchange on DLI. They will process it and a card will be sent to you in the mail. \*\*\**On your first purchase, the STAR card takes off 20%! We used it to pay for our vehicle maintenance/new tires/etc. when preparing our vehicle for overseas! Just a thought...*\*\*\*
17. Start working with your spouse on their In-Country Trip Plan. This is fun! You will make many, many drafts, but be a part of the planning! You are working hard at this too!

***By now, you have created some sort of binder to collect all these passports, birth certificates, etc. If not, please do this, keep it handy somewhere so it won't get packed away!***

***Now, it is about 3 months out...***

1. How are you going to stay in touch with your extended family while overseas? Get a Skype Account (or another Internet based phone service)! This is a priceless tool that our technology guru's have created! It is a phone line through the computer. I was leery of it at first, but now that I am overseas and talking face to face with my parents, siblings, and sharing Christmas with them (virtually), it is a great tool. All you need for this is have a computer and a web camera. Next, go to the website and create an account. This is free. It is very easy and the Skype website walks you through this. Now, you can call anyone who also has a Skype account for free and talk webcam to webcam. This is great, but what about grandma and grandpa who don't have webcams and aren't going to.... Then, all you have to do is buy a Skype phone number. This number can be any area code you would like (*we bought a N. Carolina one since grandma and papa live there*). Again, very easy to get on-line. It costs about \$25.00 for an entire year! Now, grandma and papa can call you from their phone, to a stateside number, and it rings to your computer, wherever in the world you may be!!! Great, huh! Now, one more thing to make your life so easy... buy a plan to be able to call anywhere in the US of A for a very small price... again, around \$25.00 for an entire year! Now, you can call grandma and papa from your computer to their phone line and talk for hours if you wish and there is no bill... you bought the plan to talk to anyone in the US! It is just awesome!
2. Start thinking about what you want to move overseas in your *express* shipment (PRO gear is taken in this shipment. These items don't count against your weight limit... use it as much as possible! I have heard of people's bikes, desks, etc. counting as PRO gear before! It is worth the try right!!!) Remember to not pack

anything that is electrical if you can at all help it in this shipment... if you do it will really slow things down when it comes through customs. What you want to move overseas in your *HHG* shipment? What you want to put in *storage*, and what you are going to pack with you in your luggage and take with you. Also, there is one other option... what you want to *mail to yourself* to help you survive those first couple weeks in a new country. *I highly recommend this! Especially if you have children! I have 4 little girls who really appreciated having some puzzles, crayons, coloring books, and their favorite baby greeting them when they got there! I loved having one set of my own sheets! My husband liked having his tools with him to help with the new home.* Mail it to your sponsor or someone who is going to be there right away to greet you when you arrive in country. That way it will in your home already or arrive shortly after! \*\*\**Use the great post office APO boxes that are a flat rate box. The biggest ones are currently only \$10.95 to mail no matter what you stuff in it!\*\*\**

3. While you are doing this, you may want to create an updated inventory list for your Renter's/Home Insurance. Take pictures of things on and working, video is even better... if something breaks while in transition or ends up missing, you will have documentation ready for the claim with your insurance agency. *By the way, most renters' insurance (ours is through USAA) covers your items while in transit overseas.*
4. Do you have good luggage for this move? Might want to invest in some good gear for this. You will definitely be using your luggage over and over again while traveling about. We definitely visited the new REI store in Monterey frequently!
5. Make extra keys for all locked items. We made extra vehicle keys, fire safe box keys, etc.
6. Start stocking up on any US comfort foods and toiletries that you may want to pack with you. Some countries allow you to have a 'consumables' allotment for your move. Others do not. (usually given if moving to a very poor country and no US commissary or base is near-by) For us, we were not given a consumables allotment so we took very little, but what we did take went into sealed plastic containers that the moving company felt was appropriate. The fear is that rats and other rodents will get into the shipment while on plane or boat and find your food. Use your senses regarding this and pack with caution. \*\*\**If you are sending in the express shipment, put anything that could leak into separate zip-lock bags, because the air compression can make things explode.\*\*\**
7. While you are stocking up on things, here are some tips...
  - a. Take lots of surge protectors and extension cords.
  - b. If a birthday or holiday is going to occur near the time of your arrival, you may want to purchase and pack gifts, wrapping paper, etc. ahead of time. These may even be something you mail ahead to yourself. *(Halloween came right after we arrived so we packed costumes and mailed them... good thing since the Embassy had a huge Halloween event with the kids collecting candy, chili cookoff, etc.)*
  - c. Take lots of wipes and Purrell... you will be traveling a lot and will need these, no matter where you are going!

- d. Tampons and razors are sometimes uncommon in certain countries so you may want to stock up!
  - e. Take lots of batteries for flashlights... at least in the Middle East, the power goes out quite regularly. Also, battery powered clocks are best.
  - f. Cleaning supplies.
  - g. Get some good hats for everyone!
  - h. Sunglasses.
  - i. Movies that you or your children really love to watch and if you are a book lover, then maybe stock up on a few good reads!
  - j. Printer paper and refill ink cartridges for printer.
  - k. Make-up
  - l. Pet Food
  - m. Clothes that are appropriate for the climate you are heading to. *We had lived in sunny California for years so we did not own snow boots, winter coats, etc. Glad I bought them and shipped in the express shipment... we needed them right away!*
8. Check up on the status of your On-line Bill Pay. Make sure you have all the correct addresses and payment amounts. Set up your auto payments so you don't have to worry about paying the bills during your move. Do it now to make sure all is working smoothly before you depart.

## **2 months out...**

- 1. Tell your car insurance company about your plans. If you do not own the car, then you will need a letter drafted from the loan owner authorizing that the vehicle is allowed to go into your country. This letter will be sent to you usually 30 days out.
- 2. Get written statements from your doctor stating that you can carry your daily medication in your carry-on luggage and is allowed to be with you at all times. This is really on the cautious side, but some countries require it as you go through their customs.
- 3. Start getting the required items needed for your vehicle to be allowed in your country. Each country is different, and TMO can give you a detailed list of the needed items. *For Turkey, they wanted snow chains, extra bulbs for your headlights, extra wiper blades, and about 20 other things! All of these go into a box and are shipped with your car so it is there at the inbound customs. \*\*\*Car seats CAN be sent with your vehicle if they are strapped in!!!\*\*\**
- 4. You will also need a copy of the title for export of the vehicle. If you cannot obtain one, then a letter from the leaser should be sufficient.
- 5. Create a travel medical kit ... stock up on the yummy green stuff that helps your tummy feel better after eating foreign food (Imodium)!
- 6. Get a travel power adaptor that includes a small transformer!!! *REI again!*
- 7. Packing alcohol? This is a good question to ask your CLO. *We did not pack any because we didn't want it poured out at customs. You're taking a chance, especially if going to a Muslim country.*
- 8. If you are being supported by the Embassy (find out from PLU), then ask if they have placement for you. You will most likely need to fill out a housing form for them. It is quite different from place to place, but for Turkey, a board met and

- decided where we should live, since the housing is disbursed all about the city (for security purposes). If/When you are assigned to a home, ask the CLO to put you in touch with the current person living there or in another place nearby. You can ask this person if you need curtains, shower curtains, a vacuum, a grill, play equipment for your children, outside/deck furniture, etc. If items are already provided, it will save a lot in your shipment weights!
9. TRICARE will cover you while in transit, once you are in country, and when traveling aboard in general. No worries. But, if a relative is coming to visit, then they may want to look into international insurance. Also, you may want to ask your children's grandparents or a close friend to get a tourist passport and have it handy, just in case they were needed... again I am being on the cautious side here!
  10. Overseas Schooling for the children and Marine... a whole new bear to contend with! Seek guidance from the CLO on this! My husband swears by private tutoring... after being in school for 2+ years, being able to meet at a coffee shop or at home was a better setting, plus a private tutor can allow for much flexibility in your planned travels.
  11. Animals... another beast in itself. There are lots of issues to consider. Prepare early. We did not have a pet, but a neighbor did and the biggest issue was getting their pet on a plane earlier than they were leaving, but arriving at the same time so they could get their pet off the plane. This will need to be thought through if you plan to take some leave along the way as well.

***Assuming by now you have your orders...***

1. Go to TMO and set up your move and shipments dates/times. There are a lot of dates and times being shouted out here so don't be afraid to ask questions!!!
2. When setting up your flight to your country... did you know you can ask for a layover in a mid-way place? This is especially good for children who cannot endure a 14+ hour flight and a change in time zones that is higher than their age! Split it up! And while you have stopped, stay over for a few days and enjoy the country you are in! For us, the military sent us to London. We asked for a 5 day layover period to acclimate ourselves to the time change and give the kids a break from the flights. They agreed and we made a vacation out of it! *\*\*\*OH! Ask for a night flight... this will help make the flight easier for the kids (hopefully they will sleep), and will make the transition in time zones a bit easier. \*\*\**
3. Now that you have your flight arranged.... Think about what is going to make this doable if you have children. For us, we invested in TWO little DVD players that were battery operated and have a long play time (around 3 hours). We bought child headphones (they need to fit on their little heads) for each, and splitter with sound booster (get this... when you split the sound goes down, and on an airplane there is a lot of humming noise). We stocked up on crayons, coloring books, snacks, etc. Older children will appreciate a MP3 player with music. We had one and put lullabies on them. During our hotel stays, we would play it to help them go to sleep!
4. Get the correct country codes for each country you are going to be flying through. Should you miss a flight or something goes awry, you will need to call the Embassy and get some help. Each country has a different country code that you

have to dial before the number. Also, make sure the Embassy phone numbers work!!! Try them on your Skype line!

5. Continue to get your Hep B shots... it is a series shot!!!

### **30 Days out...**

1. Call to set up your cancellation of internet, phone, cable, etc.
2. Set up move-out pre-screen and final inspections if you live on-base. If paying to get your house cleaned, make sure you get a certified check. Fill out the stop allotment form at the housing office. Get the e-mail, phone number, and name of the person who handles this. Most likely, it will not be completed correctly and you will have to call and check on this once overseas. *This happened to us, not fun.*
3. If taking your vehicle overseas, get it professionally cleaned. It has to be clean at the export dock. Treat yourself... have it done!
4. Get one last prescription refill that will last through your transition period.
5. Fill out the Post Office form to forward all your mail to your new address.
6. If you think you might need it, go get an International Driver's License from AAA. It is cheap and very easy to get (location is on Soledad Street in Monterey). Good for 1 year from date of issue. Just need a passport picture. *We haven't used ours, but I am told in Europe they are used more.*
7. Make one last check on all important papers. Compile them and **HAND CARRY** these with you as you travel:
  - a. Copies of Orders (at least 10)
  - b. Official and Tourist Passports
  - c. Birth certificates and a copy of each
  - d. Immunization records
  - e. Social security cards
  - f. Updated Wills
  - g. Power Of Attorney(s)
  - h. Rental Insurance Policies AND updated inventory list
  - i. Marriage Certificate
  - j. Car registration, title (or letter), insurance documentation, and spare keys
  - k. Bank book and checks (have at least a 3 month supply)
  - l. Finance worksheet with account information and payment due date and amounts
  - m. Extra identification pictures
  - n. Any school papers needed
  - o. Pet records
  - p. Last year's tax records (*I didn't bring them and sure enough we needed them... they are stuck in storage right now doing us no good.*)
  - q. Important phone numbers for all relevant Embassy personnel and USMC command (with country codes)
  - r. Your guide books to help get around your new home!

